

THE PLACE OF EVIL IN A MORAL SYSTEM

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THE PLACE OF EVIL IN A MORAL SYSTEM

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## ANALYSIS.

Introduction:—By a moral system is here meant the whole order of human life. It presupposes, first, an ideal of conduct, and second, freedom to strive after this ideal.

A moral system is taken for granted. This standpoint is in agreement with optimistic philosophy and the convictions of the race. Thus we are supported in our presupposition by both faith and reason.

Chapter I:—Our viewpoint is not incongruous with a moral purpose. Were finite evil wills eternal and independent, a moral system would be impossible. We must not suppose that moral excludes the possibility of evil. Good presupposes freedom of choice. Hence, theoretically at least, we must admit the possibility of moral lapse in finite beings. Yet the system, that embraces such a possibility, can be perfect, as a system.

Our system, then, is moral, not in the sense of absolute, because it has in it a place for evil; it is not imperfect as a system, because the evil in it is neither independent nor determined.

Chapter II:—The Nature of Evil. Evil is of three kinds: physical, moral and metaphysical. These three forms must not be confused. Physical and moral evil can become intelligible only when properly distinguished from the metaphysical aspect of evil.

Leibnitz explains the source of evil as metaphysical imperfection. Sin is privation. Julius Mueller objects to this view on the ground that it will not explain positive acts of the will. He





further asks: "Does it agree with our experience? Does it harmonize with conscience or with the feeling of abhorrence with which evil fills us?"

So far as moral evil is concerned, Mueller is no doubt right. Metaphysically, however, Leibnitz may have been right in calling evil negative.

Chapter III. Physical Evil:—The right to inquire into this problem cannot be denied us. In our day of scientific investigation we no longer stand in awe of natural forces; yet the problem of natural evil continues to baffle us. The so-called irrationalities of nature appear to the mind as disorders.

This is no proof that a partial solution is impossible. Contemplation of the problem will tend to dissipate absurdities.

In one sense we might consider as <sup>physical</sup> ~~moral~~ evil that which we try to shun, — anything distasteful, irksome, dreaded. The criterion by which to judge would then be our personal feeling. In another sense, we might consider as evil what our better judgment tells us will ultimately work destruction. Thus, physical evil is that which appears both absurd and disagreeable, in the light of most extended knowledge.

Yet, before we can pass final judgment as to the good or evil of any given case, it is necessary to know the whole plan that embraces it. Our limited knowledge will not enable us to know all that may be implied or involved; so that, perhaps after all, physical evil would be such only in appearance.





Wrong views on naturalism interfere with a successful consideration of this problem. The natural world is often thought of as wholly independent of God. Plato regarded the world as an imperfect realization of a divine idea. Comte argued that the problem of physical evil made it necessary to limit either God's power or his goodness. Mill held somewhat similar views.

Leibnitz explained physical evil as necessary imperfection of all created. Yet Leibnitz believes that good always outweighs evil. He further maintains that it makes for good.

Lotze objects to evil as a means of good. He sees no virtue in suffering as a warning, because this does not explain why the evil of which we are warned is necessary. He prefers to make physical evil flow from moral evil.

We naturally wonder then, why the innocent suffer. Evidently disobedience cannot be the only cause of physical evil.

Royce explains evil by philosophical idealism. Evil is a defective expression of a good order. Suffering is a temporal reality. Without it, life would be imperfect. Royce also believes that there is a "soul of goodness in things evil"; for the presence of evil makes room for a conscious struggle whereby the soul seeks its completion in the eternal order.

Fiske also believes that everything is a fragment of the dramatic whole.

A study of causality will show that God is indeed in all things. Objects of disorder in the natural world may be only ne-



cessary steps in the working out of a greater plan. Physical evil may be in perfect harmony with the plan of the Eternal.

Chapter IV ,Moral Evil:-A partial definition of moral evil may be expressed as follows:a conscious transgression of the moral law,a conscious choosing of the worse in presence of the better,a conscious doing of something less than the best.A complete definition must throw some light on the attitude of the individual toward his deeds.Sin,then,is that which our moral sense and an enlightened conscience tells us ought not to be.

The manner,in which the moral faculties of man may have been developed,is a matter of indifference;we know that the moral-rational nature of man is a fact.

Fiske attributes the power of judging moral truths to the evolution of ideals.His view is largely mechanical.Spiritual faculties are a development of nature which automatically expresses itself.

Mechanical developments will not account for the conscious life;for conscious life is a new fact,a new power,which somehow has been added to the organism.

The same objection obtains against the spontaneous development of our moral nature.This too,must be referred to a free e causal act of an infinite personal will.

Our standards of judging right and wrong may change,but a deed is right or wrong for us according to the light and the moral sense we possess.All relative conduct would appear immoral



to a perfect moral consciousness.

The purpose to be righteous and to be pure is the best criterion by which to judge the moral life of finite individuals. Moral evil is the conscious purpose to be less than our highest ideal represents to us.

Leibnitz makes moral evil, as well as all other evil, negative. The world is the best possible, he claims, since the permission of evil was necessary for the good of the whole. The negative element, which is sin, comes from the finite agents.

Mueller believes that evil is an operative principle, a wilful turning away from God. The motive is selfishness.

Spinoza's conception of evil is intellectualistic. Sin is a concept of imperfection.

Martineau makes sin a personal matter.

With Kant, moral evil is only phenomenal.

According to Royce, all evil is in God. Even the ill will of the individual is included in the absolute. Royce distinguishes, however, between the temporal and the eternal order. Sin is a conscious forgetting, which results from a conscious narrowing of the field of attention.

Fechner thinks of evil as something more realistic. It is essential to progress, because it furnishes an occasion for efforts to remove it. Fechner here ignores the distinction between imperfection of nature and positive evil will.

We come to the following conclusions concerning moral evil:-

First, moral evil must be free. Determined moral evil is a contradiction. There can be no responsibility without freedom.





Second, moral evil must be positive. Even sins of omission are positive when truth is consciously ignored.

Third, moral evil is, in a sense, relative. Moral individuals have an ideal of perfection which carries them beyond their present attainments.

Fourth, moral good is not dependent upon moral evil. It is possible for the goodwill to exercise its power of volition without the opposing evil will.

Fifth, imperfection may in a measure become the occasion of moral attainment, because present failures spur to a conscious striving after something better.

Chapter V, The Metaphysical Aspect of Evil:—If we make God the final cause of all things in the universe, evil must be accounted for in some satisfactory way without contradicting our original presupposition of a moral system. God cannot be held directly responsible for all evil in the world. It involves a contradiction to suppose that the ill will of the individual can be determined. Yet by the cultivation of habit, man may come to the place where he spontaneously meets the demands of a moral law.

From the fact that freedom was necessary to make deeds either morally good or morally evil, it does not follow that the evil will was itself necessary. Leibnitz evaded the difficulties arising from a necessary evil will by making only the good real.

It is consistent to hold, that God could have dispensed with the evil will of the individual; for man is not compelled to will





evil before he is able to will the good. In short, positive evil is not an essential factor in producing good.

The metaphysical nature of evil is better understood when we distinguish between abstract sin and sinful deeds. The idea of an abstract evil principle is based on crude thought. Actual sin must be individual.

It follows then that the individual must have been endowed with the power to exercise his will. Yet we cannot make God the direct author of the evil will. Though God made man free and gave him power to act, he did not determine what should be the nature of his acts.

Whatever may be possible logically, we know from experience that man, blessed with freedom and endowed with power, often does sin.

Chapter VI. The Origin of Evil:—The source of ill will cannot be in an eternal, independent principle. Dualism is equally impossible. Nor can the ill will be the product of divine causality, for we cannot account for the incongruity of such a creative act. Nor could the individual be free and moral, if his evil will were determined.

It follows then, that evil must either have arisen of itself, or it had its <sup>beginning</sup> ~~acts~~ in free volitional acts of finite individuals. It could not have arisen of itself, for spontaneity explains nothing. Its source must be sought in man.

But how came man to voluntary sin? The Genesis story takes us back only to the tempter, but does not attempt to explain the



evil will of the tempter. The Manichaeian system lands us in dualism.

Comte and Mill attributed evil to the limitation of God's power. Kant seeks the source in man's sensuous nature. Others tell us that the evil will had its origin in man's extra-temporal acts of self-decision. However, Leibnitz, the defender of this view, places the extra-temporal existence only in the divine understanding, the source of essence, not in the divine will, the source of existence.

It brings us no nearer to the solution of our problem to place the origin of evil in the soul's pre-existence, or in an act of humanity.

The origin of evil must be sought in free finite persons. Freedom is necessary because acts would have no moral significance without it. Finitude is necessary, because free volitional evil would not be apt to occur under any other conditions. Though finite persons have only limited power, it is nevertheless the power of self-direction.

Finite persons possess not only limited power, but limited knowledge as well. Sin originates and thrives best in ignorance. Yet sin is essentially different from error. With the awakening of moral consciousness, materially bad conduct becomes sinful; for a consciousness of moral relations places on man a moral responsibility.

Thus man is permitted to sin, because he has liberty; he



is able to sin, because he possesses personal power; man does sin, because he is finite.

Man's knowledge and moral sense grow by slow degrees, yet he gradually attains the capacity to comprehend truth. But as this development goes on, man does not always desist from evil.

Chapter VII, The Propagation of Evil:—After the evil will originates, it is supported by the influence of positive acts of the will. The influence of sinful lives all about us is felt. In our own lives sinful tendencies, cultivated by habit, makes us willing to be less than the best. The force of habit also makes it easy for evil tendencies to grow; so that, even after an individual becomes aware of the sinfulness of his deeds, he still persists in doing them.

Sin is propagated in the social realm, by the dynamic force of an evil will, influencing other wills. This propagation is furthered by the tendency in the lives of individuals to imitate. The urging of evil minded persons, the allurements of sinful acts, all tend to weaken the power of resistance. Sin does not propagate itself *per se*; it spreads through the influence of positive evil wills and evil deeds.

Conclusion:—In a relative world it is quite natural that we should have sin. We may ask ourselves, why this relativity? Was imperfection necessary? If we could become truly moral beings only through choice and by conscious striving, it was necessary that we should be in a condition where striving is possible. Such a condition is conceivable only for free finite beings.





Yet finite individuals are not compelled to strive in vain. They may always blunder in darkness; but logically, there is no absolute necessity of their positive ill will. They might follow the inner light, strive after their highest ideals, and thus become morally perfect.



## THE PLACE OF EVIL IN A MORAL SYSTEM.

### Introduction.

By a moral system is here meant the whole order of human life with all its relations and implications concerning conduct and ethical attributes. This presupposes two things: first, that there is an ideal of conduct and perfection for man to aim at; second, that man is free to pursue this ideal, or not to pursue it, as his will determines. The second presupposition also implies that, in order to be moral, man must have some knowledge of right and wrong, and coupled with it, a sense of duty or desire to do the right.

No attempt is made to prove that there is a moral system. That is taken for granted. It might be profitable to study conditions, to note the tendency of growth and development, to analyze our inner motives and dispositions, with a view of determining to what extent moral forces are at work in and about us. This, however, would only lead to the subject under consideration. It seems best, therefore, to accept the teaching of optimistic philosophy on this point, to trust the deep and widespread conviction of the race and the longing of our inner nature, by admitting that the system of which we are a part, can not be otherwise than moral.

By presupposing a moral system, the attempt is not to evade a difficulty. We take this position because we are deal-



ing neither with scepticism nor with pessimism. The question of a moral order of humanity has been dealt with more or less directly by the best philosophers of the past decades. Never before has philosophy been so illuminated by a theistic and optimistic tendency.

Furthermore, we feel justified in taking this position because the whole tendency of the human race is optimistic. Optimists believe in a moral system. The world has always believed in it. It is true, there have always been a few pessimists, but the tendency of the race has never been in that direction. The few individual pessimists are like jarring notes of discord in a great composition; they offend the moral sense, but do not destroy our faith in the deeper harmony of things. Pessimism is obnoxious to the very nature of man.

From the consideration above, it appears that in many instances faith has been as strong in the support of optimism as has reason. It must be borne in mind, however, that there is nothing in optimism contrary to reason. In fact, no other view is so free from rational objections. Optimism preserves the unity of the system, which unity is necessary to remove all rational contradictions. Should we admit with some pessimists that all being is evil, that man is without the sense of moral responsibility, and unable to aspire to truer things, two insoluble difficulties would at once present themselves. In the first place, we should then have no way of accounting for





whatever good the great majority of our fellowmen seem to possess and be aware of. The best we could do would be to insist that they are deceiving themselves. Secondly, we should have to prove that evil does not destroy itself, as our experience teaches us it does. Should we modify our premise and say that being is not all evil, but that, though good exists, evil is co-existent with it, a still more perplexing problem would arise. Dualism with all its contradictions would stand in our way. We should be subjected to the unprofitable task of trying to remove the maxim, that a house divided against itself can not stand.

The assumption, that the moral sense in man is only a development of utilitarianism, does not affect the moral character of the system. Granted, that, so far as the history of the race is concerned, man's conception of the good and his moral sense were developed by shrewdly choosing what was for his own personal good, it does not follow from this, that his moral nature now is essentially different from what it would have been, had it come into existence any other way. The verdict, that Man's code of conduct is variable, that his notion of moral right changes with increased knowledge and a growing sense of right and wrong, does not prove that man is necessarily unmoral, or wholly immoral. Nor does this prove that there is no immutable, perfect moral law in the Divine Mind; it only shows that man in his relative state, comprehends this ideal only in





part. In God's mind, the law is perfect and invariable; in man's life, it is realized imperfectly. Yet we become aware of its presence. Were it not for the fact, that we have some knowledge of the unfolding of this valid code or rule in the lives of human beings, we could not know that the changes in moral notions or actions, to which we give the name progress, are properly so-called. We walk in partial darkness, yet we are guided by a great light far ahead. It does not matter how we are able to see that light, or how the power of sight originated; it is a question of how it now manifests itself in the lives of men. For God, having in mind a moral purpose, could work out his plan by one method as well as by another. It is enough to say that it is reasonable to believe in a moral system.

Thus we are supported by the teachings of theistic philosophy, as well as by both faith and reason, when we accept a moral basis for our system. So far, our standpoint seems justified. It remains to be shown that there is in this moral system a place for evil.



## CHAPTER I.

## Our Proposition not Incongruous with a Moral Purpose.

Some would deny the possibility of our proposition, on the ground that it would make the whole system evil. They go on the supposition that the admission of evil in a system would destroy its moral character. As <sup>the word</sup> evil is ordinarily used, that would possibly be implied. If evil were a metaphysical reality, positive and independent, there would be some ground for objection to evil in a moral system. Further discussion, however, on the nature of evil, will show that we have no such impossible proposition in mind.

Another objection sometimes raised against the possibility of evil in a moral system grows out of the meaning too often put into the word moral. It is assumed that moral excludes the possibility of evil. This cannot be; for the meaning of the term implies, rather than excludes, the possibility of evil. Moral good must be free and volitional. Without a choice in the matter, the good would be determined, and hence not moral.

Theoretically, then, we must admit the possibility of moral lapse. This possibility however, applies only to finite beings, not to the Infinite. This does not imply that the Infinite is righteous without choice, or does not possess the elements of true personality. God is not liable to moral lapse, because perfection of attributes excludes all motives for the choice of evil, and because He is free from ignorance and the limita



tions that lead to moral blunders. He is not exempt because of any volitional impotence. In the Absolute, perfect moral attributes and perfect knowledge preclude the choice of moral evil. God, with infinite energy, embraces perfect standards from eternity. With man it is not so. Here we find imperfection of nature and limitation of knowledge. Man is often affected by the frailties of human nature, and left helpless by ignorance and limitations. In God we find indefectible moral goodness; in man, contingent moral goodness. Hence God can not sin, although he possesses volitional freedom. But in the sphere of the finite, there is always an alternativity of choice, because of his relativity, or imposed relationship. With alternativity necessarily goes the possibility, but not the necessity, of evil. In other words, finite moral creatures are free to sin, or not to sin. But in no case is sin determined.

If then, our conception of moral links it with freedom, it cannot be harmonized with determinism; for freedom and necessity can not exist together, since they mutually exclude each other. As dependent beings, we are under the moral law, but we become moral in the highest sense, only as we voluntarily obey this law and turn from evil.

It does not follow that a system in which such a possibility of evil is admitted, is contrary to a moral purpose. The system, as a system, can still be perfect. Our system, then, is not moral in the sense of absolute, because it has in it a place





for evil; it is not imperfect as a system, because the evil in it is neither independent nor determined.

The result is, first, that there is a place for evil in a moral system, and second, that the existence of evil is consistent with a moral purpose, or with the goodness of God. How this can be, will appear from a consideration of the nature and the origin of evil.



## CHAPTER II.

## The Nature of Evil.

Evil is of three kinds: physical, moral, and metaphysical. Ever since Leibnitz' time, philosophers have had to distinguish between these three forms of evil. They may not agree with Leibnitz in his final explanation of evil, but they are forced to admit that an explanation of any one of these forms of evil does not give us adequate light on the origin or nature of the whole problem. They may not concede that all evil is privation, but they must recognize the fact that physical and moral evil become intelligible only when properly distinguished from the metaphysical aspect of evil.

The source of evil, Leibnitz explains, is metaphysical imperfection; sin is privation, is negative. This original imperfection is the "Cause idéale du mal". Yet Leibnitz is very careful not to make evil necessary, or the result of God's consequent will. Actual evil is one thing, and the ideal ground of evil is quite another.

To this view Julius Mueller objects that it will not explain positive acts of the will. These must be more than negative, since man can concentrate his powers in doing evil. The nature of such evil deeds will be more fully discussed under the head of moral evil. Let it suffice here, to say that they need not affect our position on the question of privation or original imperfection.



Mueller further raises these questions in reference to Leibnitz' standpoint: "Does it agree with our experience?" "Does it harmonize with conscience or with the feeling of abhorrence with which evil fills us?" The same reply must be given here that we gave above. If we mean moral evil, Mueller is right. Our experience is not with metaphysical imperfection, but with actual evil wills and evil deeds. A bad conscience and a feeling of abhorrence are not provoked by any sense of privation. Yet it may result from a careful investigation of this problem that, in a certain sense, Leibnitz was right in calling evil negative.



### CHAPTER III.

#### Physical Evil.

Aristotle taught that the problem of the natural world was unavoidably concealed from mortal man. To pry into this mystery would be presumptuous impiety. Nature was to him a closed book. Physical science had not yet been developed; the laws of the material world had not been discovered and defined; so that the mind of man stood in awe of the great transforming and destroying elements of nature. The forces of nature were thought to be gods, giving vent to their wrath or manifesting their favor. Hence it was considered both expedient and proper to please the gods and not disturb them by prying into the realm of mysterious forces.

In our day of scientific knowledge, it is natural that we should take a different attitude toward the forces of nature. The natural laws have an attraction for us the like of which has never been known before. Many of the most brilliant minds are busy making investigations and trying experiments that shall give us a better understanding of the natural world.

The problem of natural evil, however, still baffles the minds of philosophers. It is hard to conceive that it is not incongruous with a beneficent world-plan. The most difficult problem of evil that confronts us is that which arises in connection with the so-called irrationalities of nature. Even





optimists must admit that evil of this kind appears to be a disorder. This is no proof, however, that the solution of at least part of these difficulties must forever lie beyond the power and dominion of man. Even though <sup>a</sup>all mysteries cannot be solved, a contemplation of the problem of natural evil is none the less helpful; for it will tend to dissipate absurdity as well as to solve mystery.

Before we can discuss the question as to whether the problem of physical evil is incongruous with <sup>a</sup>the beneficent world-plan, we must arrive at some definition of physical evil.

In one sense, we might consider all that which we try to shun, evil. Anything distasteful, anything irksome, anything that we dread, would accordingly be stamped evil. It follows, then, that all that which we hail with delight must be good. We court the good; we shun the evil. If that be our definition of evil, the only criterion by which we could judge would be our own immediate, personal feeling in the matter. We should then be governed by taste and inclination, rather than by judgment. But this can not be all of evil. In another sense we might consider as evil that which we know will ultimately work destruction, and as good, that which makes for final gain, though it prove distasteful at first. Here of course, only judgment can decide what is to be called good, and what, evil. This does not mean that judgment and disposition are necessarily at variance with each other. It only means that, without judgment, there can be no decision based on rational expediency. After the virtue



of a case is determined by judgment, it is quite natural that our disposition should incline the same way. Thus it becomes evident that physical good is that which seems both rationally expedient and desirable, and physical evil is that which appears both absurd and disagreeable in the light of most extended knowledge.

But before we can pass final judgment as to the good or evil of any given case, it is necessary to know the whole plan that embraces it. We must further know whether the objects of disorder (for so they appear to us) are, or are not, out of harmony with that plan. Too often we imagine that there is disorder because we see but a fragment of the plan. The merits and demerits of a case are determined by immediate conditions. Our limited knowledge <sup>and</sup> ~~of~~ the brevity of our temporal experience are such, that things far away seem to us vague and uncertain. Hence we seem to walk by sight rather than by thought and faith. Whatever presents itself under the form of immediate disorder, is taken for real. The transient or merely incidental occupies in our minds a place of prominence and takes on the form of the abiding. Could we but widen the range of our vision, and look to the end, there is no doubt that we should lose sight of many of our difficulties. Perhaps after all, physical evil would turn out to be such only apparently.

Wrong views on naturalism are frequently the prime cause of difficulties which confront us in the consideration of this problem. Too often we think that God has nothing to do with e-



vents in the natural world. The tendency is to limit God's power, or to question the beneficence and validity of divine purpose. It is thought that either God can not help in the case of physical disorder, or He will not.

Thus Plato regarded the world as an imperfect realization of a divine idea. The Creator could not make a perfect world out of the wretched material at his disposal. The nature of his divine idea would seem to warrant a better world. In fact, he seems to have believed that the object of God's purpose was a perfect world; but his power was too limited to produce such.

Comte, carrying out the implications of reasoning on the theological plane, boldly affirmed that, if God had the power to create a better world than the one in which we live, the only reason for not having done so must be sought in his lack of moral beneficence; for the physical evil in the world, from the theological point of view, he claims, is not a consequence of our own free deeds, but a direct result of divine purpose. Hence it is necessary to limit either God's power or his goodness.

Mill also conceives of this world as an evil world, but of God as constantly at work eliminating the evil. God's impotence, however, stands in the way of greater success. Unlike Comte, Mill defends the moral character of God, but in agreement with him, he reasons that it is necessary to limit his power; for conditions are not what they ought to be, and hence cannot be the voluntary expression of a beneficent will.





Leibnitz' view is in contrast with the views mentioned above. According to him, all evil is privation, is negative. Everything created must be imperfect, for God can not create God. Morally and metaphysically, evil is but the absence of positive good; and since physical evil flows from metaphysical evil, it is only a necessary imperfection. These conditions Leibnitz harmonizes with God's goodness and power by distinguishing between the antecedent and the consequent will of God. By the antecedent, abstract will of God, good in general is willed (desired); but by the consequent will, He wills that which, all things considered, is best, though imperfect. The antecedent will has for its object the ideal good; the consequent will has for its object the actual conditions as they are produced.

Although Leibnitz believes that the physical world is imperfect, he does not concede that there is more evil than good in the world. In every sense the good outweighs the evil, whether only among the human race, or among all intelligent beings, including geni (angels), or among all creatures, including animals. By making this comparison, he accepts the quantitative estimate of good and evil. Evil, though only a privation, is nevertheless to be contrasted with good. The imperfect stands over against the perfect; the actual, over against the ideal. This itself gives us very little light on the nature of evil; but it makes it all the more certain that we have a problem to deal with, a problem which obstinately returns as often as we set it aside. Thus Leib-



nitz still has his problem of evil, even though he has pronounced it negative, and assured us that it is only a state of imperfection, in the absence of the ideal good.

Furthermore, physical evil finds justification with Leibnitz in that it makes for good. The imperfect results in the more perfect. Out of every condition of privation is born another, possessing a greater degree of perfection. The very failures of the imperfect teach us to shun the same and strive after something better. Thus evil becomes a part of the good order in the physical world as well as in the moral.

Lotze objects to evil as a means of producing good, since this means ought to be employed only when minds are psychologically so defectively organized, that without this the end can not be realized. "Why," he asks, "did God make minds so imperfect?" And again, "How could evil be a means of good in the case of unintelligent beings?"

Instead of Lotze's first question we might as well ask, Why did not God give us wisdom equal to his own, so that we should always know the good intuitively? Then, when we came to the moral realm, we should have to ask, Why did he not make us with natures like his own, so that we should always want to do the good and have the power to do it? But if our natures were thus determined, we could be nothing more than faultless automata. We should be as worthless as we were faultless; for moral character is positive, and cannot exist without choice. Depen-



dent beings with determined moral attributes would be a contradiction. But relative beings, that possess freedom and power of striving, may learn to overcome their own imperfections and thus come nearer their goal of attainment.

In regard to Lotze's second question, we need only reply that all sentient beings are either instinctively or consciously aware of experiences. For non-sentient beings physical evil does not really exist. It is true, physical conditions affect all objects of nature, but the consequence appears as good or evil only to sentient beings. All such consciously or unconsciously profit by their experience. In unintelligent beings instinct takes the place of reason. The usual distinction made between intelligent and unintelligent beings, therefore, can not apply here; for it already appears that, to some extent, even unintelligent, sentient beings are capable of profiting by evil experiences. It must not be inferred that such beings avoid only things that are immediately disagreeable. We have an illustration of the contrary in the animal, which suffers temporarily for the sake of protecting its young, or <sup>of</sup> avoiding future evil which it dreads.

Lotze sees no special virtue in suffering as a warning, since this fact does not explain why the evil of which we are warned is necessary. He does not deny the fact that suffering is a warning, and that warning may prevent more evil; he only raises the question, "Why must man come in contact with physical evil at all?" Since this problem will receive more attention





at the close of our present chapter, we shall leave it now.

According to Lotze, moral evil flows from metaphysical, and physical in turn, from moral. In other words, owing to this imperfect nature, man sins; because he sins, he suffers. We are at once at a loss to account for the suffering of the innocent. If justice is to continue, why did not nature correct this condition long ago and keep the innocent from suffering? Some may answer that there are no innocent, since humanity by its own revolt precipitated itself into error and suffering; that an act of humanity corrupted the hearts of the whole race. But it is only by a stretch of the imagination that we can attribute a voluntary act of sin to the race collectively. Such a collective conception of sinning humanity, means nothing whatever. Moreover, physical evil is not only a retributive outcome of moral evil. It is true, moral and physical evil seem to be closely connected. Disobedience to moral law is not without its physical consequences; for here also, man reaps what he sows. On the other hand, disobedience can not be the only cause of physical evil; warning and correction cannot be the whole purpose of suffering. The nature of physical evil is something more closely connected with the fundamental nature of being.

Royce explains evil by philosophical idealism. All sin, all imperfection, all suffering, is found only in the temporal order. The final good is in the eternal order. Evil is not an illusion; it is not only a privation; it is a positive, though defective, undesirable, fragmentary expression of the good order.



Suffering then, is a temporal reality; but it has no place in the eternal order any more than moral evil has. In his work entitled, "The World and the Individual," he contends in the chapter on "The Struggle with Evil", that morally evil deeds and ill fortunes of mankind are inseparably linked aspects of the temporal order, since ill/fortune, as well as morally evil deeds, result from the defective expression of some finite will.

Royce likewise holds that there is a "Soul of goodness in things evil". Without suffering, life would not be perfect. The very presence of ill in the temporal order is a condition of perfection in the eternal order; for this condition makes room for a conscious struggle toward a goal, without which there can be no fulfilment or attainment. Through this struggle, the soul seeks its completion in the eternal order, where, free from the ills of the finite, it becomes one with the Infinite.

Fiske agrees with Royce in his view, that everything is a fragment of the dramatic whole. Goodness, joy, pain, wickedness, - all are necessary to make a complete, perfect world. Each fragment, though defective and distasteful, serves its purpose. Everything is an essential fragment of the good order.

A careful study of the principles of causality will help to reveal the true nature of the physical world. It will help us to see that a free, intelligent causality must lie back of all things. Nothing can be thought of as independent from a volitional, creative will. If we couple with this the conception of a





larger world plan, as suggested above, we come to see that "God is indeed in all things; but that he is in some for their furtherance in others for their change and destruction."

Hence, the objects of this order, as they appear to us, may be only necessary steps in the working out of that larger plan. Instead of being out of harmony with it, they may serve to bring about a development of conditions that are all for the best.

It may not be possible to solve the entire problem of human suffering, or of physical evil generally; but we can attain to practical certainty that it is not out of harmony with a beneficent world plan. We observed above that physical evil is closely connected with moral evil, that there is unity in the fundamental nature of our being. This may not always appear in the relations of our present life. Even where these relations do exist, our present knowledge does not always reveal it to us. We must bear in mind, however, that our present knowledge is limited. The world plan in its entirety is concealed from our narrow vision. If we knew the entire plan and could see through all things, we might be able in some way to justify every particular case of physical suffering. As it is, we must determine from the general trend of things. We cannot tell in each case just why that particular suffering; but walking by thought and faith, we can attain to rational certainty, that there is nothing incongruous between a faith in God's goodness and the presence of





natural evil in the world.

Hence it is only rational to infer that physical evil can not be wholly excluded from the world of temporal, human beings. It is not necessary to adopt the conception of philosophical idealism, advocated by Royce, in order to form a consistent theory of physical evil; but, no doubt, there is much truth in that part of his view which demands a conscious struggle of the individual, as a condition of attainment. Could created beings, who are not God, but who are just what they are, dependent beings, but with almost infinite possibilities of development, ever become what they ought to be, if conditions were other than they are? No law of reason demands that they should. Our experience does not teach us that they would. We might further raise such questions as these, Would life be poorer or richer without pain and suffering? Would social life, with all its advantages of unselfish joy ever have blessed humanity, without the conditions that brought us into contact with natural evil? Would the human soul ever approach the ideal set before it, if it were not for the very conditions that surround it? To say that suffering is in general desirable does not necessarily lead to mysticism. In fact, suffering is hardly ever sought or desired directly; yet, after it has been endured, we often feel that it has enriched our experience and made life more precious.

~~In so far then, physical evil seems to be in harmony with a beneficent world plan. If God, therefore, saw fit to permit~~



We find an illustration ready to hand in nature. A bit of sand or some other hard substance finds its way into the soft flesh of the oyster. Irritation ensues, death threatens; but nature has made provision against this calamity. The oyster deposits round the source of irritation a fluid secretion. This hardens, and we have the beginning of a pearl, nature's fairest gem. Nor is the work completed all at once. The pearl owes its peculiar iridescence to the fact that this calcareous substance is not all deposited at one and the same time, but in successive layers.

To some extent then, physical evil seems to be in harmony with a beneficent world plan. It is only natural, therefore, that it should be closely connected with the fundamental nature of being. It may not be an essential fragment of the whole, of the eternal, as Royce would have it; but, if not that, it must still be in perfect harmony with a beneficent plan of divine causality.



## CHAPTER IV.

## Moral Evil.

It is impossible to define moral evil in short definite terms. In a general way it is thought of as a conscious transgression of the moral law, a conscious choosing of the worse in presence of the better, or a conscious doing of something less than the best. These definitions emphasize what is fundamental in moral evil, but they are inadequate. An adequate conception of moral evil implies also an understanding of the human attitude toward evil deeds. They may be obnoxious to us, but that is not necessarily the case; for abhorrence does not always serve as a sufficient norm whereby to measure evil. Sometimes even the good in the form of duty seems irksome. At other times, man seems to delight in evil though his judgment condemns it. Morally speaking, we cannot always say that man courts the good and shuns the evil.

If we say that only that is good which an enlightened conscience feels ought to be, we have gained a somewhat broader and more accurate view of moral good. Sin, then, is that which our moral sense tells us ought not to be. Hence by the power of some insight, we call one thing good and another evil. We recognize truth and are able to distinguish righteousness from evil, because we are endowed with the moral sense and blessed with intelligence. It is by virtue of a moral, rational nature that we call good, good, and evil, evil. Sin is contrary to both moral con-





viction and rational insight. No moral support of sin can be thought of, because sin is immoral. No rational excuse for sin can be made, because sin is irrational.

But whence this moral sense, and whence the intelligence to guide us in our choice and determine the nature of our judgment? This question belongs partly to the next chapter; but lest there should be some objection to the stand taken in the paragraph above, it should be observed here that it makes no difference how man came into possession of his present endowment. We know that he is thus endowed. The method of realization is incidental; the fact is important. The value of the moral sense is in the quality of the true freeman with inner dignity. Granted, that this quality of the higher self came into man from some power not himself; granted, that it came by some process of evolution, whether mechanically, as Spencer, Bergson, and some others believe, or as idealistic philosophers maintain, namely, that "the will to live, acting upon matter, evolves organisms we call men, who in the course of time develop the power of asking questions concerning their origin and relation to other phenomena"; granted, that it may still be relative, that our standard of conduct and moral attributes are variable, - granted, that all these things are true, the moral-rational nature of man would still be a fact, and consequently man would be a responsible moral being.

Some philosophers attribute this power of judging moral truths to the evolution of ideals. Thus Fiske, in his little book, "Through Nature to God", says: "Morality comes on the scene



when there is an alternative offered of leading better lives or worse lives." And again, "Moral evil is simply<sup>a</sup> characteristic of the lower states of being as looked at from the higher states." According to this view, moral good, as well as moral evil, is relative. All deeds are in a sense defective expressions of the natural impulses. So far, there may be no objection, but Fiske is subject to criticism, when he permits the implication that nature is automatically expressing itself in terms of life. Hence this view not only makes all spiritual faculties a development of nature; it is essentially mechanical, for all change is automatic, and the cause is but a blind force of nature. Being develops itself. We are perplexed to know what adequate cause lies back of it all. How, under such conditions, did conscious life appear? How could consciousness awaken? Consciousness could not well have been produced by blind organisms. The argument, that it appears very faintly at first and becomes more definite as the process goes on, does not diminish the difficulty. It is still a new fact, a new power, that somehow has been added to the organism of an individual. A conscious life represents not only an organism; it embodies a free, unitary and definite self. This self may have appeared under the form of gradual development, but it can have come only from some source that already embodied in itself the quality of personal selfconsciousness. And what can be said of the source of consciousness, can be said also of the moral faculties of our ethical nature. Ethical standards may change; the





moral sense may grow; but however it expresses itself, the fact remains that it is there, and that it must be accounted for in some adequate way. Whence our ideal of a moral life?—an ideal which, though it be relative, is nevertheless better than our present attainments. The only rational explanation is to refer the moral nature of man to the influence of a free, causal act of an infinite personal will. Hence it is quite correct to say that we are endowed with a moral sense and blessed with intelligence enough to find our way in the realm of ethical conduct, even though our consciousness unfold gradually and our moral sense grow with experience. This evolution is not a mechanical one, but it results from some adequate source and proceeds according to some plan.

In regard to Fiske's view the question also arises, Is it when the alternatives are offered, or when we act in the face of those alternatives, that our lives become moral? Temporally, this may seem to be a distinction without a difference, for we do not always contemplate principles before we act. Sometimes the ~~we~~ act even seems to be one with the decision. But while there may not be much difference temporally, logically the difference is fundamental. Perceiving evil is not identical with participating in evil. Our standards of measuring right and wrong may change. Indeed, we know that they have changed, and are constantly changing. But a deed is moral or immoral for us according to the light in which it is performed. What is morally wrong for us to-





day, in an age of enlightenment and civilization, was not necessarily so for our ancestors many generations ago. What is morally wrong today was always materially bad, that is, would have appeared wrong, to a more highly developed moral consciousness. In fact, all relative conduct must be conceived as materially wrong, since it would appear so to a perfect moral consciousness. Moral evil then, has nothing to do with the characteristics of the lower states of being, as looked at from some higher state. All that <sup>such a</sup> ~~this~~ statement can possibly mean is that our understanding of moral right and wrong is growing. But all deeds that are an inadequate expression of a moral ideal we possess at the time, whether high or low, are morally evil, because they are less than the best that is known to us. It is true, that we gain a higher degree of moral perfection by the conscious striving toward our ideal, even though, after we have attained it, we come to look back upon it as relative. This is unavoidable where there is moral progress. The standard changes with each succeeding epoch and attainment. But what is there, morally speaking, in right conduct to make it righteous, or in purity of feeling to make it pure, except the purpose to be righteous and to be pure? In the same way moral evil is but the conscious purpose to be other than our highest ideal represents to us.

This thought becomes clearer when we further distinguish between error and sin. Error consists in passing false judgments. It constitutes one element of wrong action, but it is not sin.



Error and sin are closely related, but they are distinct. Truth and error, in finite minds, are both relative, just as we have seen that right and wrong can be relative. Notwithstanding this close connection and this parallelism, there is a very definite distinction. Error is seated in the intellect; sin is an act of the will. Just this volitional element is necessary to make an act sinful.

Before summing up our conclusions on the problem of moral evil, it seems best to indicate briefly the views of noted philosophers who have labored in this field.

Leibnitz maintains that there can be no moral evil without freedom of will, yet he denies that evil deeds are positive. He believes that God chose the best in creating the world, but holds that the best plan does not necessarily exclude evil. The world is the best possible, notwithstanding the evil in it. In reply to Bayle's argument that God should cause virtue if he could, since "the greatest love which a ruler can show for virtue is to cause it", Leibnitz answers: "When we detach things that are connected together, - the parts from the whole, the human race from the universe, the attributes of God from each other, his power from his wisdom, - we are permitted to say that God can cause virtue to be in the world without any admixture of vice, and even that he may easily cause it to be so." But he does not cause it, says Leibnitz, because the good of the whole universe requires the permission of evil. Though he does not say so very definitely, he undoubtedly





means that there must be free, conscious striving to live up to an ideal or to comply with a moral law before there can be moral good; but he overlooks the fact that conscious willing to do evil can be just as positive as conscious willing to do good. God is not responsible for evil, says Leibnitz, since he does not directly will it, but merely makes it possible. The power to act is perfect and good and comes from God; but the negative element, which is sin (weakness), comes from the agent himself.

To this view Julius Mueller replies: "If the Theodicee teaches only a possibility of sin, then it should have examined the relation of free will to evil, for sin would then be an act of free will unbiassed by necessity." He further claims that sin cannot be attributed to freedom alone, for sin does not exist until freedom has been sacrificed. He does not believe that evil can be explained by the freedom of the will, and asks, "Will this theory of privation explain positive acts of the will as well as weaknesses?"

Moral evil, according to Mueller, is an operative principle, a perverting influence, pervading man's whole nature. It can not be explained as privation or metaphysical imperfection. Nor can it be derived from man's sensuous nature, nor from contrasts of individual lives. The operative principle is a wilful turning away from God. Selfishness lies at the base of this sinful attitude. "The idol which man in sin sets up in place of God can be none other than himself." He makes self and self-satisfaction the





highest aim of his moral life. The innermost essence of sin, the ruling and penetrating principle in all its forms, is selfishness. Moral evil, according to this view, is more than negative. It is positive just as moral good is positive.

Spinoza's conception of evil is intellectualistic, like his conception of being. Adequate ideas conceive their objects. The good is realized through knowledge. A lack of the good is a lack of knowledge. Virtue is knowledge; sin is ignorance or perverted knowledge. Knowledge of the bad is an inadequate idea. It is a concept of imperfection and expresses nothing positive. Sin, then, is only a lesser reality. The difference between good and evil is one of degree.

James Martineau makes of sin a personal matter that cannot be traced to any foreign source. The essence of it lies in the conscious free choice of the worse in the presence of the better, no less possible.

Kant made moral evil phenomenal. He derives it from sense, not from man's intelligible or ideal essence.

According to Royce, moral as well as natural evil is in God. The existence of it is necessary, that we might have perfection; for only through a conscious struggle toward a goal is fulfillment reached. Even the evil will of the individual is God's will; for according to his idealistic philosophy, the individual will is included in the absolute will. This view, without further comments, would make God a contradiction rather than a perfect being. Hence, in another work entitled, "The World and the Individual",



the author modifies this position somewhat to preserve the perfection of God. He there makes sin a deliberate forgetting that results from a conscious narrowing of the field of attention. But just this deliberate forgetting must be a conscious act of the will, which is included in the absolute will.

Royce further distinguishes in the same work between the temporal and the eternal order, to show that sinners can not make the world less than perfect. The individual can make his world better or worse, since moral acts occur in time; but this does not affect the eternal whole. "The finite act of willing evil is identical with the absolute will only so far as it is the absolute will that the individual actor should be in his measure free. But the absolute will, as such, is just what the finite agent at the time of doing evil denies by declining to attend to it." Here what ought to be and what is fall apart in the temporal order, while in the eternal order even the evil will of the individual is God's will, so far as God wills that the individual should be free. Hence this evil will of the individual is nothing on the one hand, while on the other it is directly or indirectly a part of the whole.

Fechner treats the problem of evil as something more realistic. But with him, too, the fact of evil must not be considered apart from the effort to remove it. Evil spurs to effort, and effort is essential to progress. Good is the fruit of energetic labor that has need of its opposite, since it is obtainable only



through the conflict with evil.

The mystics held similar views. Boehme, for example, maintained that there must be evil, that good might become knowable. He does not make evil a condition for the existence of good, but a condition for recognizing it.

The contention made by Fechner that effort is essential to progress, should receive all the emphasis that can be given to it. There is also a measure of truth in his statement that evil spurs to effort; for if the individual becomes dissatisfied with his present low state, he will strive toward some higher achievement. But when Fechner affirms that good has need of its opposite, since it is attainable only through the conflict with evil, he ignores the distinction between imperfection of nature and the positive evil will. There must be relativity to make room for striving, but there need not be positive evil acts.

In many of these views the metaphysical aspect is more prominent than the moral. Hence a fuller discussion of them must be deferred till later.

We come to the following conclusions concerning moral evil:-

First, moral evil must be free and volitional. The scheme of necessity finds no place in a moral system. A determined act can have no ethical value for the one who performs that act. All deeds would be without any moral quality, if they were not free. This freedom implies the power of choosing between alternatives. The





choice can not be determined. A determined choice is a contradiction. Necessary volition is inconceivable. Just as the good deeds of man must be his own to be called moral, so his evil deeds must be his own voluntary selfexpression if they are to have in them any content of sin. We have seen that the one thing needed to make conduct morally right and feeling morally pure is the wish and purpose to be righteous and to be pure. On a mechanical plane there is not place for a moral agent. Both moral good and moral evil are more than a material condition, a state, or an abstraction. They do not exist in the abstract at all. Moral good is the good of an individual will; moral evil is the evil of an individual will. Moral is a quality of free selfexpression; it embodies the purpose of a free volitional personality.

A free moral agent is not without moral responsibility. He is considered responsible on the ground that he chooses his own course. Without this freedom of choice it would be unjust to attach any responsibility to him for the deeds he does. It is a pure contradiction to say that an individual has nothing to do with the kind of life he leads, and at the same time hold him responsible for the things he does. By what justice, or by what law of reason, can we find any excuse for either praise or blame, for either reward or punishment, if all the deeds of men are determined? Either we must grant that man is wholly unmoral, that he neither merits praise nor deserves censure for anything that he does, that all his acts have no greater significance than the ordinary events of the material world, or, we must con-



cede that his acts are free and volitional, in consequence of which, man becomes a free moral agent.

Second, Moral evil is more than privation. Any negative view is inadequate to explain the vigor with which evil wills operate in the world of moral beings. Whatever we may have to say of it as a metaphysical principle, sin, in its moral aspects, is a hideous reality. Moral evil is positive, because it is free and volitional. Imperfection is not the direct result of volition. Privation is not the object of our striving, not the end that we consciously choose. Moral evil, on the other hand, is a conscious choice of something less than the best. Even sins of omission are positive when truth is consciously ignored. Just this conscious, positive element makes an act of the will either morally good or morally evil. Moral conduct can not be wholly accounted for on the ground of metaphysical imperfection. The positive element enters here by virtue of our volitional freedom and power of choice. All deeds, it is true, are directly or indirectly an expression of our natural impulses. These impulses express themselves in two directions. They are affected more or less by the influence of environment or disposition. This truth is so evident, that frequently we hear it said that impulses determine man's actions. But can we let that pass as an unqualified statement? What of the free agency of man? Where then, is the volition which is necessary to make an act moral? Owing to this freedom an act of the will becomes positive.





There must be impulses, and even misdirected impulses are better than no impulses at all, for a soul without impulses would be a soul without wants. The result would be a life without expression and without effort. Impulses are a condition of activity, but they do not determine the moral qualities of our acts. Neither do they wholly determine what our life shall be morally or in any other respect; for we have seen that the will may become a directing force as soon as we have gained sufficient knowledge to know what is expedient. But misdirected impulses lie at the root of moral evil.

There are still other reasons, and, in a sense, weightier reasons, for objection against the inference that man is wholly a child of circumstances. Experience teaches us that man eventually learns which influences make for higher good and which are stimulated by selfish desires. Or, bearing in mind what was said about good and evil being relative, man learns sooner or later in which impulses the will of God expresses itself most perfectly. As soon as man learns this truth, the volitional element enters into play, and under the sway of the will deeds become both positive and moral. Hence moral evil may now be defined as that disturbance of life which arises from free selfdetermination to choose a course for our moral life, which course is unworthy of the moral ideal that we possess.

The apparent justification of moral evil by Leibnitz is the most unsatisfactory part of his theodicee. Moral evil, by its very nature, must be positive. Bad deeds and dispositions may be





Wrong materially, even where consciousness of a wrong is lacking; but there can be no moral wrong and no responsibility unless there is a positive evil will, a conscious choice of something less than the best.

Third, Moral evil must, in a sense, be relative. It is not the natural state of man to consciously choose evil. Sin is not consistent with the nature of an enlightened conscience; sin is unnatural and irrational. It is not expedient for man to sin. We do not believe that the natural state of man is diabolical and that the regenerate man is unnatural. Rather, we believe that man approaches his true destiny when he grows morally. The imperfect in man should constantly give way to a higher degree of perfection. So far, the teaching of the Hindu poet and philosopher, Tagore, is doubtless true, when he declares that evil, moral as well as physical and metaphysical, is only an imperfect, impermanent fragment of truth or being. All moral progress necessarily implies that. Wherever there is a tendency toward moral progress in the individual, there life instinctively takes a wider view than that of present failures. "It has an ideal of perfection which ever carries it beyond its present limitations."

It may be necessary, however, at this juncture to remind ourselves that, though moral evil is in a sense relative, <sup>and</sup> impermanent, it none the less confronts both individuals and the race as a very persistent disorder. The evil will of the individual often determines to pursue an unworthy object. Perverted



impulses result in habits that too often turn the tide of moral progress. Evil at times seems to grow rather than diminish. It asserts itself as a positive influence that interrupts moral progress in both the individual and the race. Hence it is positive, in that it is selfdetermination, and often defeats temporarily some fragment of the larger plan for moral progress; but relative, in that it never wholly triumphs over that larger plan.

There is always this advantage that moral good has over moral evil: there is perfect inner harmony of good, while evil invariably destroys itself. "To be carnally minded is death, but to be sp<sup>irit</sup>itually minded is life." Or, to quote again from the same apostle, "The wages of sin is death." The impermanence of moral evil, then, cannot be said to be of such nature that all evil necessarily turns into good. It is impermanent in another sense. If the evil will persists, so that evil acts and habits follow, life will spend itself in sin. But whenever the ~~go~~ good will prevails, moral attributes multiply. Our standard of moral good changes as our moral nature develops and our knowledge of the good increases. The conclusion, then, seems warranted that the only guarantee for permanence is the victory of good over evil and of truth over error. The selfish, wicked, stupid will must give way to the more perfect will or meet death.

Fourth, Moral good is not dependent upon moral evil. The verdict that it is obtainable only through a conflict with





evil, that it has need of its opposite, appeals strongly to the imagination, but it is not so convincing upon careful reflection. The imagination says, Everything must have its counterpart in something else of an opposite nature. Reason demands an adequate ground for the existence of all that is affirmed. Is, then, the wicked will of the individual a necessary ground for the existence of the good will? It must be borne in mind that moral good and moral evil are diametrically opposite. They mutually exclude each other. Whatever the standard of the individual, be it relative or absolute, the quality of a moral deed depends upon the intent of the individual, and not upon the standard which serves as a criterion whereby his actions are judged. Hence, on any plane there is room for opposing wills. But if, by the power and freedom of choice, the good is willed, it does not follow that this act of willing must have for its ground the opposite evil will. Reason demands only free personal volition. It does not rationally follow, <sup>though</sup> ~~then~~, that there must be moral evil that there might be moral good. There must be the possibility of moral evil, of course; otherwise man would not be free. If, however, when he discovers his moral freedom and a moral sense of right and wrong has been born within him, if then he should unerringly choose the good, he would not commit sin. He would, as it were, come face to face with the possibility of evil. He would be conscious that the moral sense within him approves certain possibilities and condemns others;





but he would not actually participate in evil and be guilty of sin. On the contrary, he would escape moral evil by acting in a normal, rational way, while his action would still be volitional. This is possible because the moral quality of the deed depends, not upon the positive evil will combated or overcome, but upon the fact that it is a good deed freely done. Or, to express it in more definite terms, moral good in finite beings is a free, conscious effort to realize one's highest ideals.

Fifth, Imperfection may in a measure become the occasion of moral attainment. We have already seen that a deed, in order to be moral, must be consciously volitional. We came to the conclusion that moral good in finite beings was a free, conscious effort to realize one's highest ideals. This very effort to realize an ideal implies a state of relativity. The desire and effort to rise above the present plane of attainment results in the realization of our ideal. But there might not be that desire and effort, were it not for a dissatisfaction with our state of imperfection. The argument here is not, that we must have positive evil, but that imperfection and the consciousness of it may lead to moral attainment. We find the reason for this in the fact that a desire to rise above our present attainments and to come nearer to our ideal results in a conscious striving. Conscious striving is the soul of moral achievement. In the lives of finite individuals, at least, it is an essential factor in the moral life. It makes the moral achievement more our own, in contrast with mere formal rightness that could conceivably be

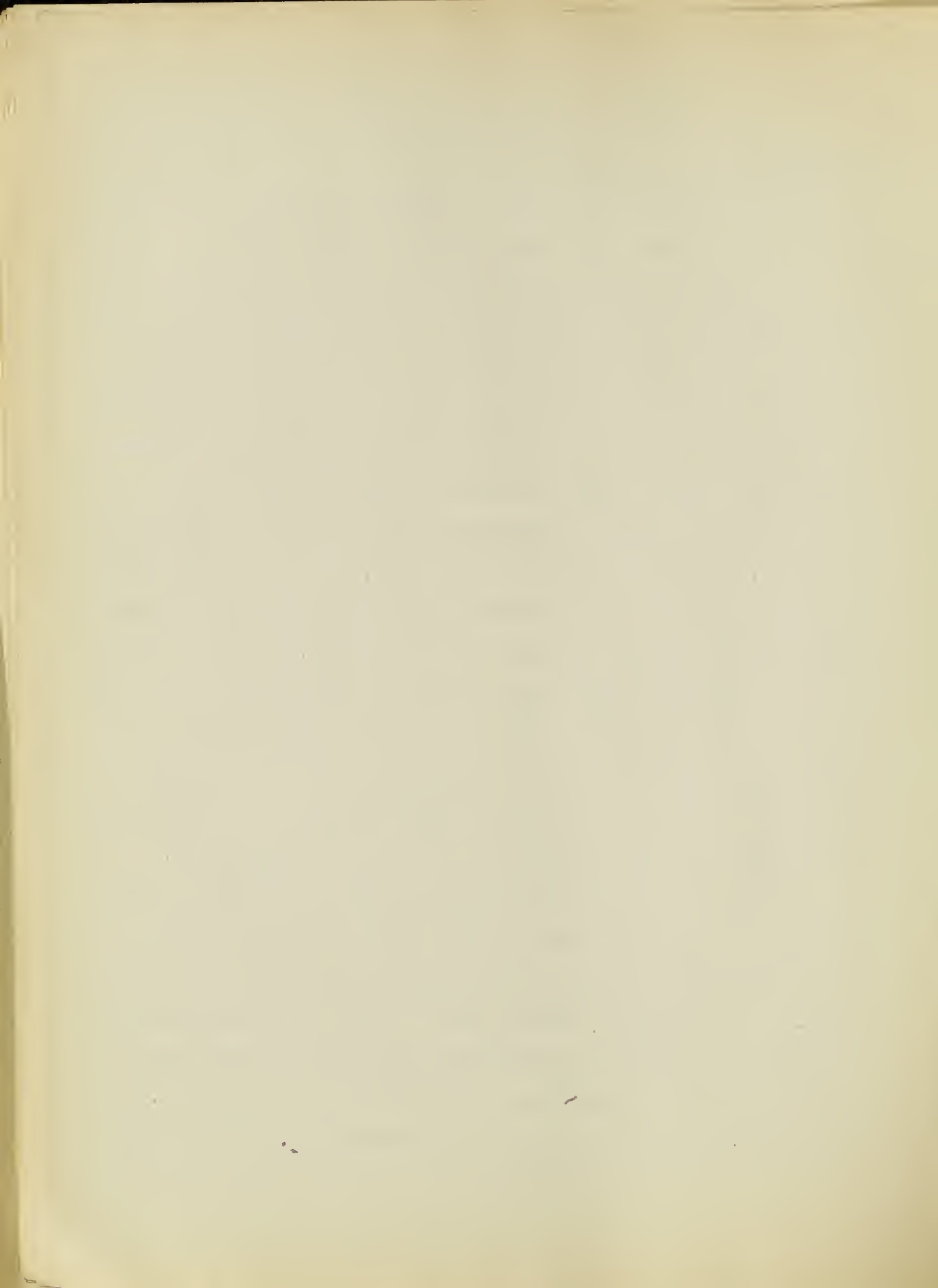


imposed.

"It were better youth should strive, through acts uncouth,  
Toward making, than repose on aught found made."

Not only the imperfection in man's moral nature, but imperfection in the whole phenomenal world as well, may serve as a means, used of God, to bring about our moral development. The presence of physical evil in the world helps to make our experience the occasion of our moral consciousness. For may we not eventually come to regard things as morally wrong because we know them to be hurtful, disastrous, irrational? We learn by experience, but fortunately for us, each generation does not need to pass through the whole chain of experiences from the very beginning, in order to acquire moral standards. We have a large fund of knowledge handed down to us from preceding generations. With this knowledge come also standards of moral conduct and moral attributes. We profit by those and by the moral truths revealed to us by divine inspiration; but yet our conception is constantly being enlarged by our own personal experience.

Hence we may find an incentive to strive toward a realization of our growing ideal, chiefly because we are conscious of our relative attainment. This ideal is a shadow of our destiny. We follow it, but cannot reach it until we attain perfection. Whether this full attainment shall ever be reached can not be known. The relative can not comprehend the absolute. But we do know that there can be progress, and that the incen-



tive for making progress comes largely from a dissatisfaction with our present attainment.

## CHAPTER V.

### The Metaphysical Aspect of Evil.

After all that might be said on the subject of moral evil, the ultimate problem remains unsolved. In our study of moral evil it was necessary to enter somewhat into a discussion of the nature of sin. This took us partly into the realm of metaphysics. The question of first principles, however, did not receive sufficient consideration. The relation of evil to ultimate causality, its essential nature, and its fundamental relations to finite persons, must be more fully considered.

Let us remind ourselves again that a moral system is assumed. We attempt only to account for the presence of evil in this system. If, then, we make God the final cause of all things in the universe, evil must be accounted for in some satisfactory way without contradicting our original presupposition of a moral system.

The Creator and Preserver of our system cannot be held directly responsible for all the evil in the world, unless we infer that all evil is an essential factor in the development of moral consciousness. But let us suppose for example, that the evil will of the individual is not essential. If, then, this evil

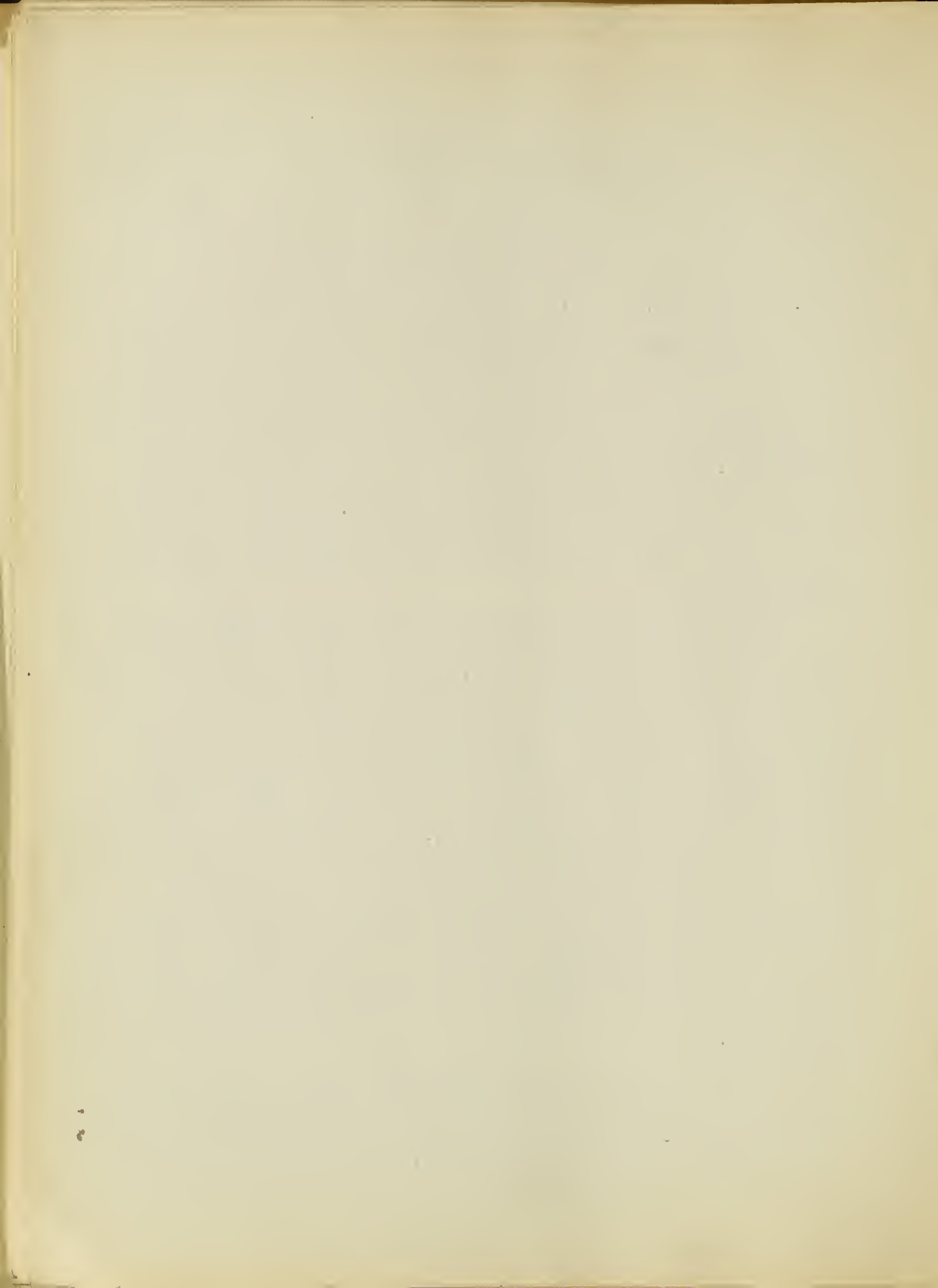




will of the individual should be determined by the creative will of God, it would follow that God had not done wisely, for this evil will is undesirable, deplorable, destructive of much good. Furthermore, this evil will is opposed to what we take to be God's will. Has God, then, determined that his will shall be contradicted? We are logically driven to such a conclusion if we maintain that God directly determines the evil will of the individual. Hence, we readily see that the scheme of necessity does not do away with the problem of evil. It makes the whole moral system a contradiction because it makes God himself a contradiction.

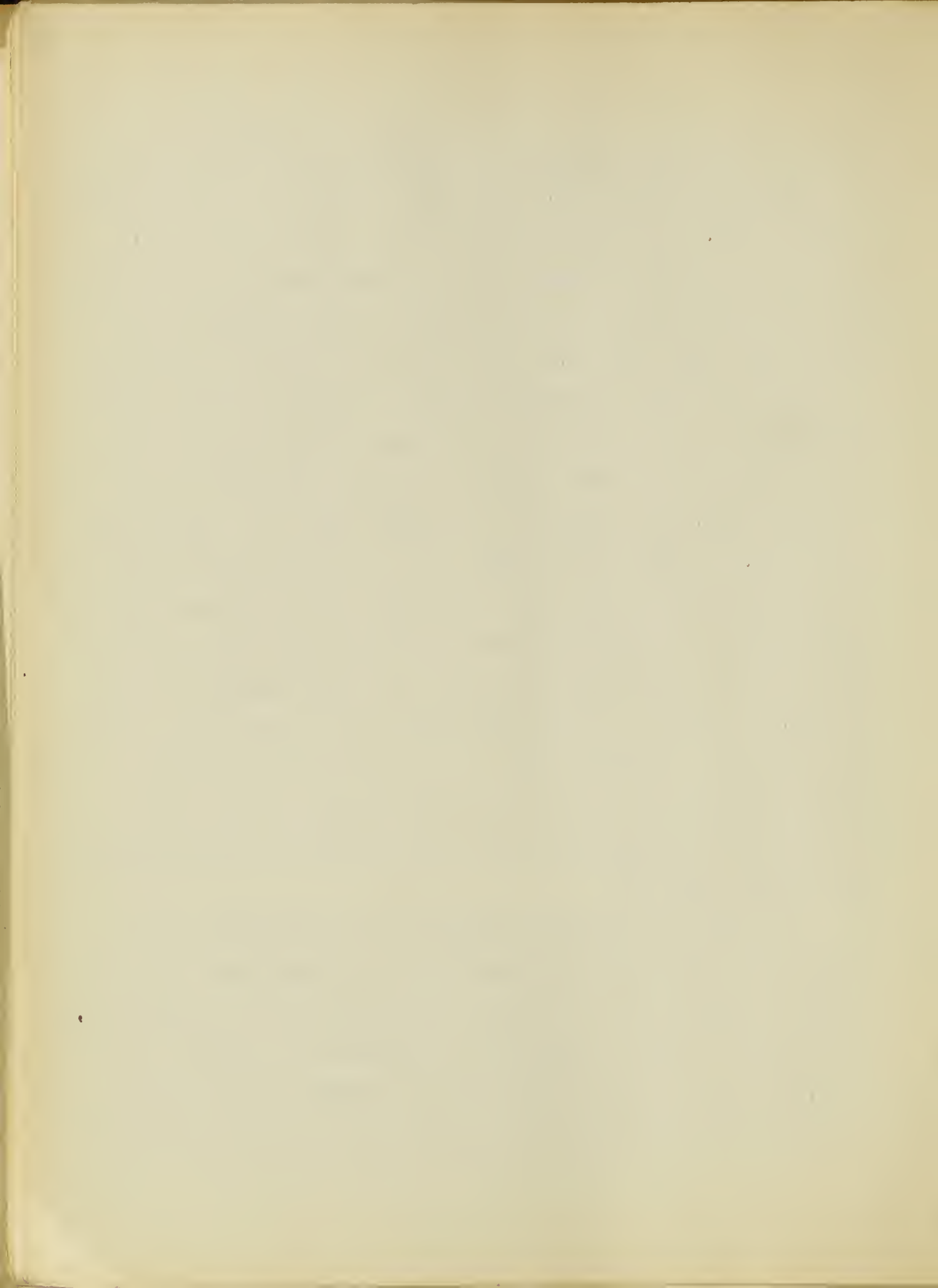
Besides making God contradict himself, the scheme of necessity makes moral evil, or sin, impossible. There can be no morality without freedom; for we have seen that a deed, in order to be moral, must be a free conscious act of a volitional agent. Moral perfection can exist only in a world of free persons; determined virtue is a contradiction. "In a sinless world there might be outward marks of perfection, but no moral element." Determined moral evil is equally as impossible as determined moral good. Under necessity sin would not be sin. There might be a wretched state of affairs but no conscious sinning, hence no moral evil.

The real nature of moral good and of moral evil now becomes more apparent. As we noticed in the beginning, moral is not the same as virtuous or sinless. In the introduction we



made a distinction between the moral good of a <sup>finite</sup> individual and the absolute good of God. We saw that for God no objective moral law existed. He is good because it is his nature to be good. Whether or not God attained to this completeness and perfection of character by free selfdetermination is a question finite knowledge cannot decide. It is within the province of human experience and human knowledge, however, to observe to what extent obedience to moral law tends to develop finite character. We know that what at first requires conscious effort, eventually becomes easy. Man's character can become fixed to a certain extent, i.e., he can do many things that duty demands without, at the time being at least, being conscious of the demand. He is governed by a subjective power; he becomes a law unto himself. This is the normal thing to expect in the development of character. The character of man determines what he does. This tendency of finite character proves the truth of the injunction: "Sow a thought, and you reap an act; sow an act, and you reap a habit; sow a habit, and you reap a character; sow a character, and you reap a destiny."

Thus man may grow less conscious of an objective moral law as he becomes more virtuous. Though the moral law still exists for him, he is not directly conscious of it in his own life. He is dead to the law because he is prompted by a power within him. Just as the child in innocency is unmoral but not immoral, because it knows nothing of the moral law, so the man of ripened

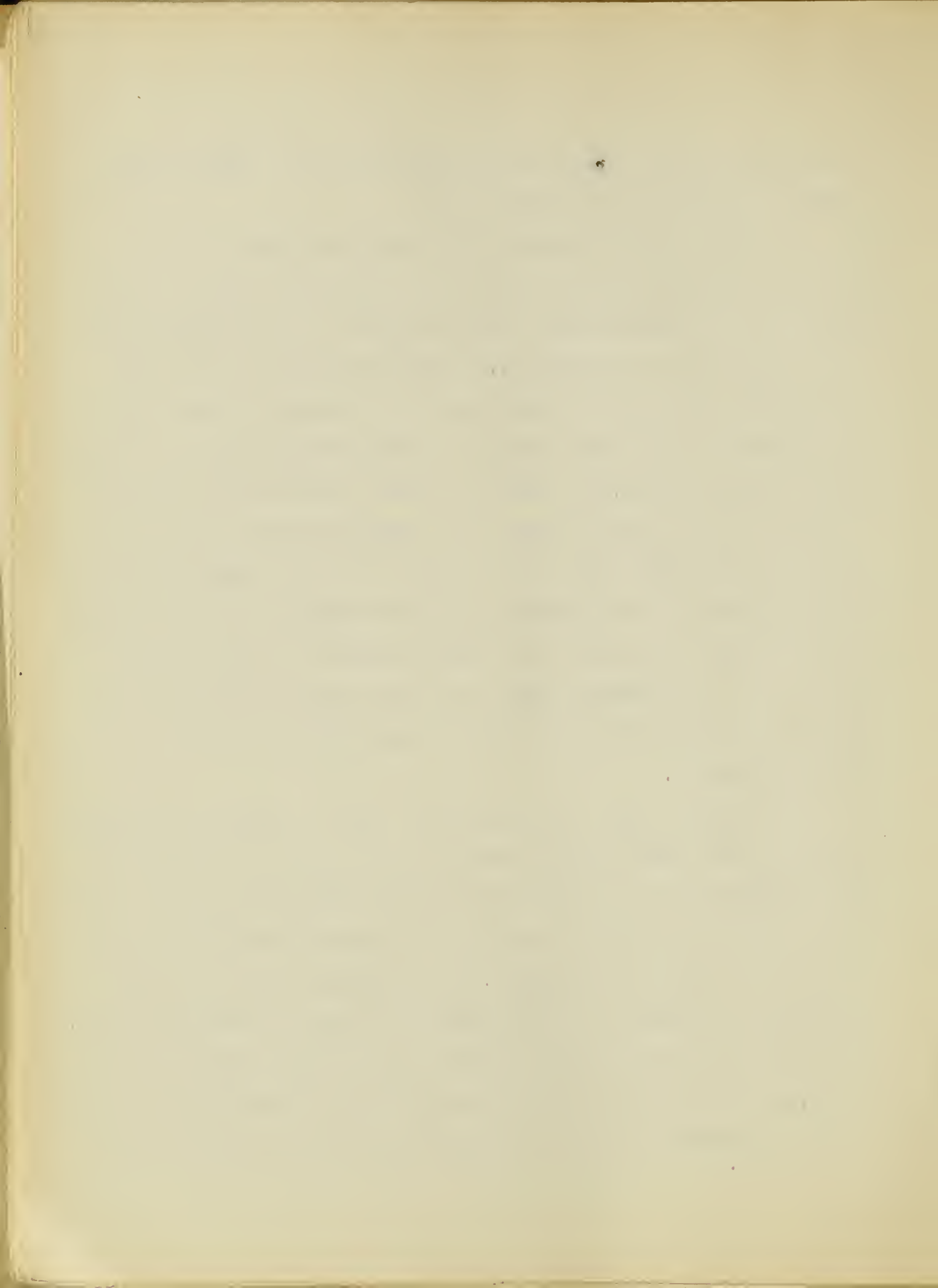


character is both moral and virtuous because he spontaneously meets the demands of the moral law.

We might further discuss the question now: Was the evil will of the individual essential that man might become morally good and virtuous? Leibnitz argues that evil is unavoidable, that all created must be imperfect. If this imperfection means only relativity, there may be consistency in Leibnitz' view. If not, it makes the whole moral system a contradiction, because it makes God a contradiction. But does this view of imperfection account for the positive acts of evil done voluntarily? Does the mere fact of privation prove that the evil will of the individual and the positive act of sinning by him are essential in the development of man's character? The complete answer to this question will have to be deferred until we discuss more fully Leibnitz' view of evil. For the present, we can only say that this does not result directly.

To consider more fully Leibnitz' view of evil, we must notice that he makes only the good real. God is the sum of reality, "Ens realissimus", but all created is imperfect. Primitive good, as well as the origin of evil, is found in the region of eternal truths, "region de verites eternelles". This, however, is only the ideal ground of evil, since evil is negative and has no efficient cause. God wills only the good in general, but he cannot create the perfect. Good in general is the object of God as knowledge, the object of his antecedent will; but things in particular, things as they

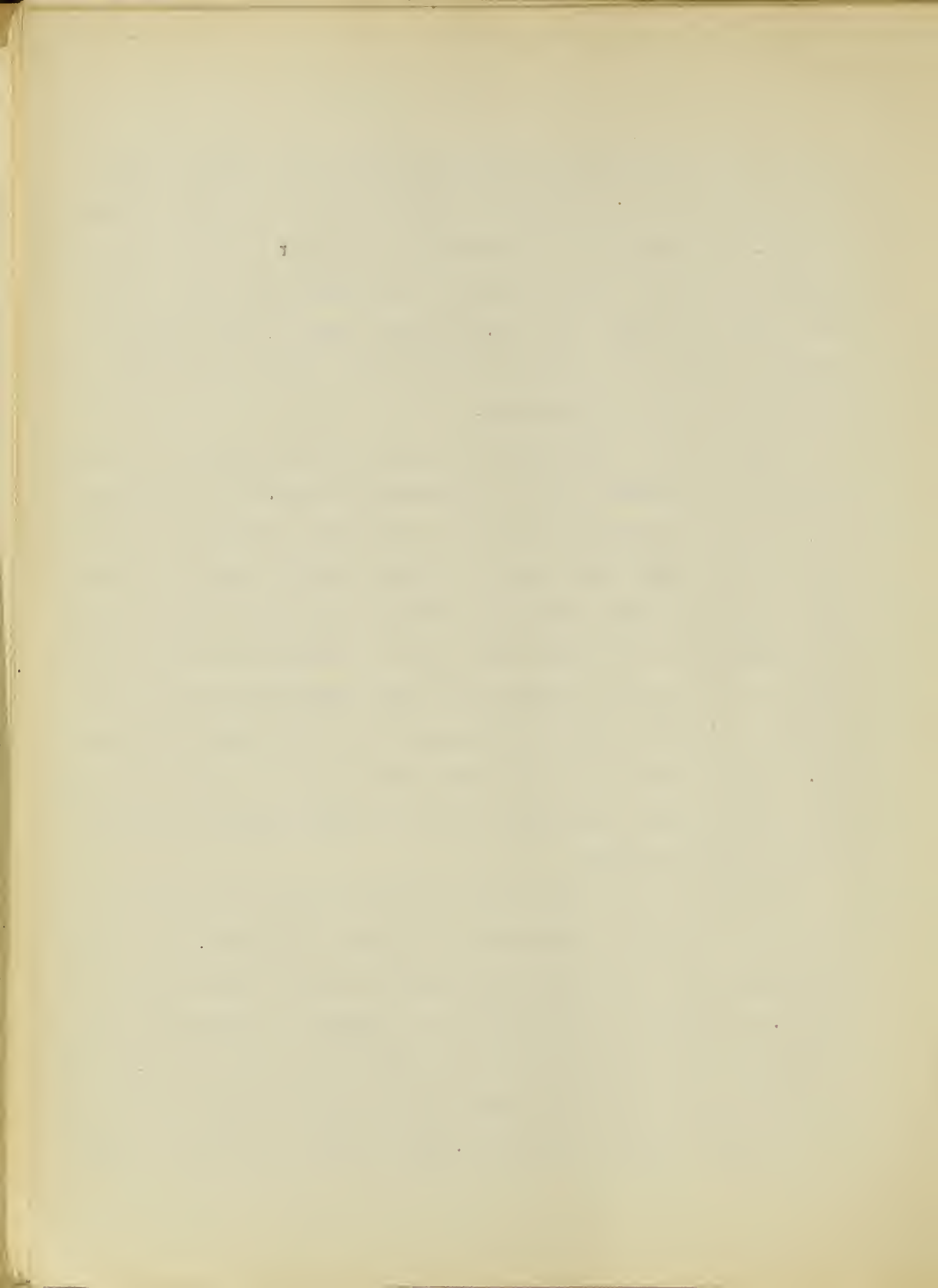




are, are the objects of his consequent will. The consequent will not only knows and prefers, but establishes and produces results, as well. This distinction by Leibnitz brings out a view which unnecessarily limits God. According to it, we must say that God desires good, but cannot have it. The ideal world of God, then, is a sinless world, a world without evil; but the actual world falls short of all these perfections.

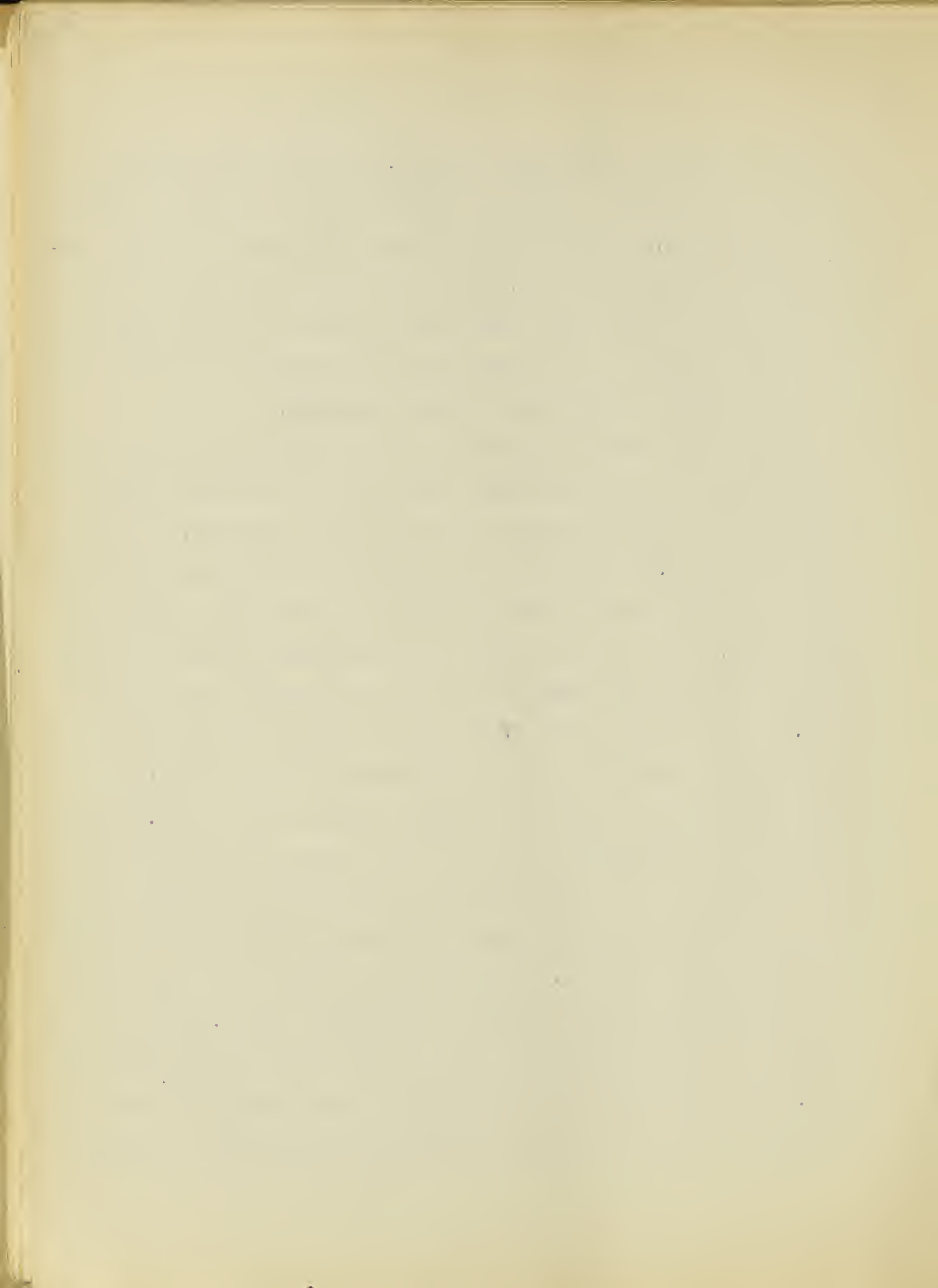
Again, God is limited if we say that the evil will of the individual is necessary for the existence of good. It is true, there could not be just that moral act of overcoming moral evil unless the evil will existed. But does it follow that God could not have made virtuous beings without it? We have said that Leibnitz may be consistent in his conclusion that all relativity is unavoidable; but if we make positive evil deeds necessary, we imply that God, and not man, is directly responsible for all disobedience and sin. It would then follow that God himself could not have dispensed with the positive rebellious will of the individual, in working out his infinite plans.

If God could not have made possible a good world without actual sin, he would be limited by an external condition. Hence this condition ought to be called God rather than the agent which it limits. As a matter of fact, God is not limited by objective laws or truths, because no such laws or truths can exist for God. If God is bound by any law, it is because he imposes it upon himself. Laws and truths, to God, are subjective. They are only the proper "modus



agendi" of his own spiritual activity. But while God cannot be limited by external laws, he is governed by his won inner character. Hence if he, in his infinite wisdom, should see fit to make possible the evil deeds of men, so that they might by free volition determine their own moral character and pass on to perfection, it would be consistent with a beneficent world plan to do so. But this is not the same as making sin itself necessary.

We are now ready to answer more definitely the question, Was the evil will of the individual essential that he might become morally good and virtuous? So far as God was concerned, we know that it was not. Therefore it is only rational to believe that God did not determine man's evil will. What God did was to make man a free being, to give him the power and opportunity of selfdirection. More will be said on this subject when we consider the origin of evil. It is now time to ask, Was the evil will of the individual an essential factor for man's development, so far as he himself was concerned? Each individual chooses either good or evil. Circumstances and influences help in a large measure to affect man's choice? Upon the other hand, his free volition can, and often does, predominate over his impulses, and is a means of withstanding and overcoming circumstances. Notwithstanding outward influences, man is a free agent, and has a power of deliberate choice. He is not compelled to will evil before he can become qualified to will the good. It is conceivable that he should be conscious of two possibilities before him, and yet invariably act wisely by choosing





the better part. Experience farther teaches us that there is a marked degree of difference between individuals in this respect; and the comparison almost invariably reflects credit upon the individual who wills the minimum amount of evil and the maximum amount of good. Ability to will the good does not in the least depend upon having first willed evil. Why, then, should we hold that actual sin is necessary for the existence of moral good? Relativity, imperfection, we have always with us, though this may change with increasing knowledge and virtue; But by what law of thought are we compelled to say that man must consciously choose to do worse than he knows, so that he may find it possible to do the good that he would consciously strive after? Choice there must be before we can have virtue; but sin is not an essential factor in producing virtue. The assertion that nothing can exist without contrast is a figment of the imagination, not a conclusion reached by sound reason.

To further understand the metaphysical nature of evil, it is necessary to distinguish between abstract sin and sinful deeds. Sin in the abstract exists only as a class term in the mind. To believe that it is anything more is a result of superficial reasoning. Sinful deeds and evil wills are real. They are never found apart from the individual to whom they belong. Hence evil dispositions had to arise and wicked deeds had to occur, before there could be moral evil. The question argued here is: Sin as a principle was not first, and sinful deeds later. Evil as a principle does not



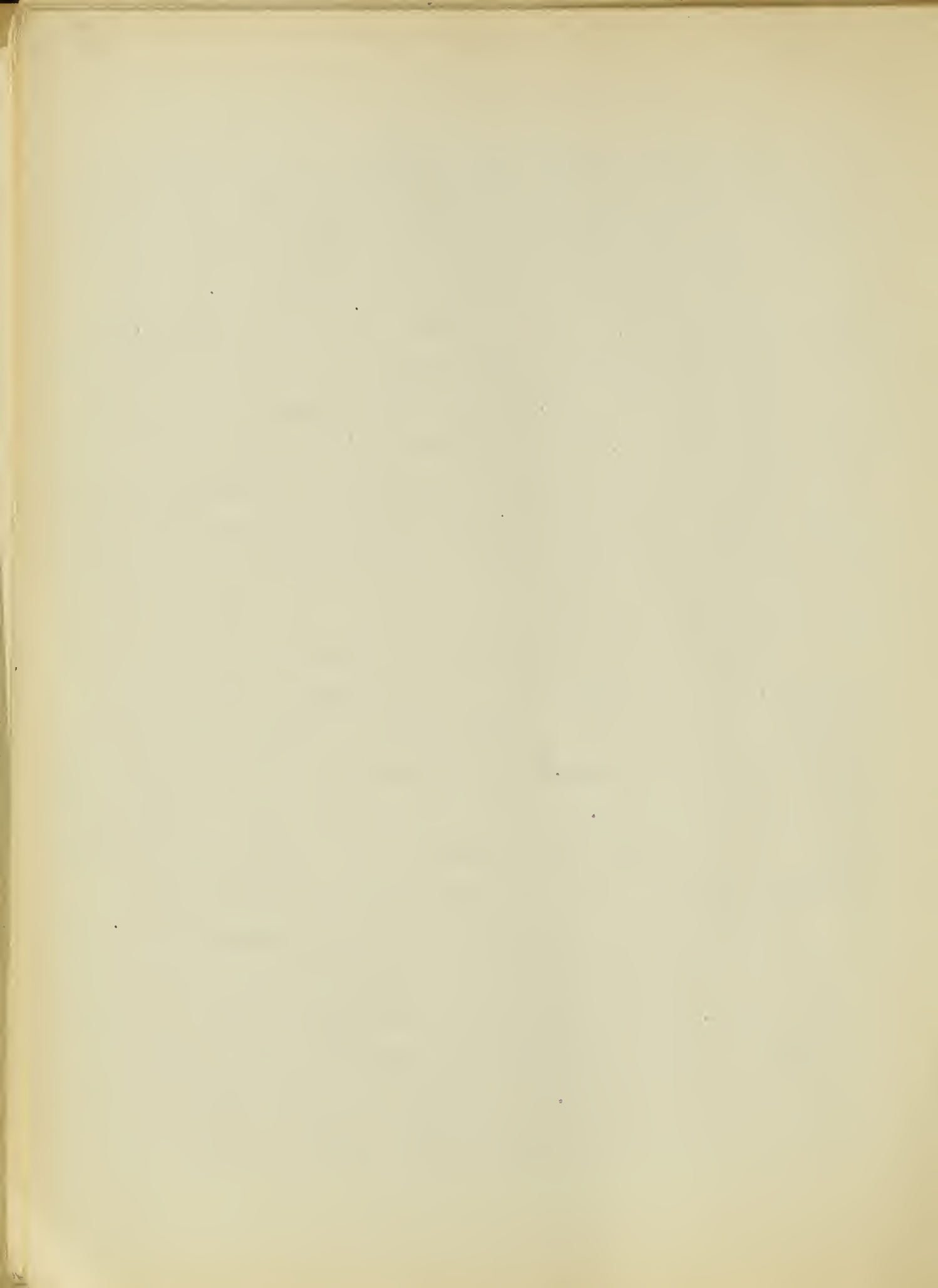


exist apart from voluntary individual acts of sin. There may be what is called a sinful attitude; but this attitude is determined wholly by the individual will and the acts which result from it.

We know from experience that man sins. Hence he must have been endowed with the power to sin. He is a finite creature. What faculties he possesses were given him or else he was endowed with the power to acquire them. In either case he has the power to do either good or evil. This power needs only the opportunity and the occasion to express itself. There is no need of bringing in a foreign principle to support a sinful tendency. This may result from the development of habit, as will be shown later in the discussion of the propagation of evil.

The belief in a primitive evil principle arises from crude thought. Whether we conceive of this principle as some eternal, personal power, or as the selfexaltation of sinless creatures, the problem remains the same; for selfexaltation is itself an evil that must be accounted for. We either make God the creator of this principle or else we make evil independent and eternal, which would of necessity involve us in a dualistic system not wholly moral.

Proceeding on the ground of our original presupposition, we must not now lose sight of the fact that we are dealing with a moral system. Hence it is a choice between making God the author of evil, or letting evil deeds and sinful wills spring from the lives of God's creatures. This view demands, as we have just shown, that God must have endowed his creatures with the power to do



either good or evil. They must have the power to act, as well as the will to do. Hence moral evil cannot be explained by freedom alone. For how could formal freedom have acquired creative power to contradict the divine will? Freedom opens the portal through which sin may enter; but there must be creative power before freedom affords any possibility of sinning, and there must be action resulting from this power before the possibility can become an actuality.

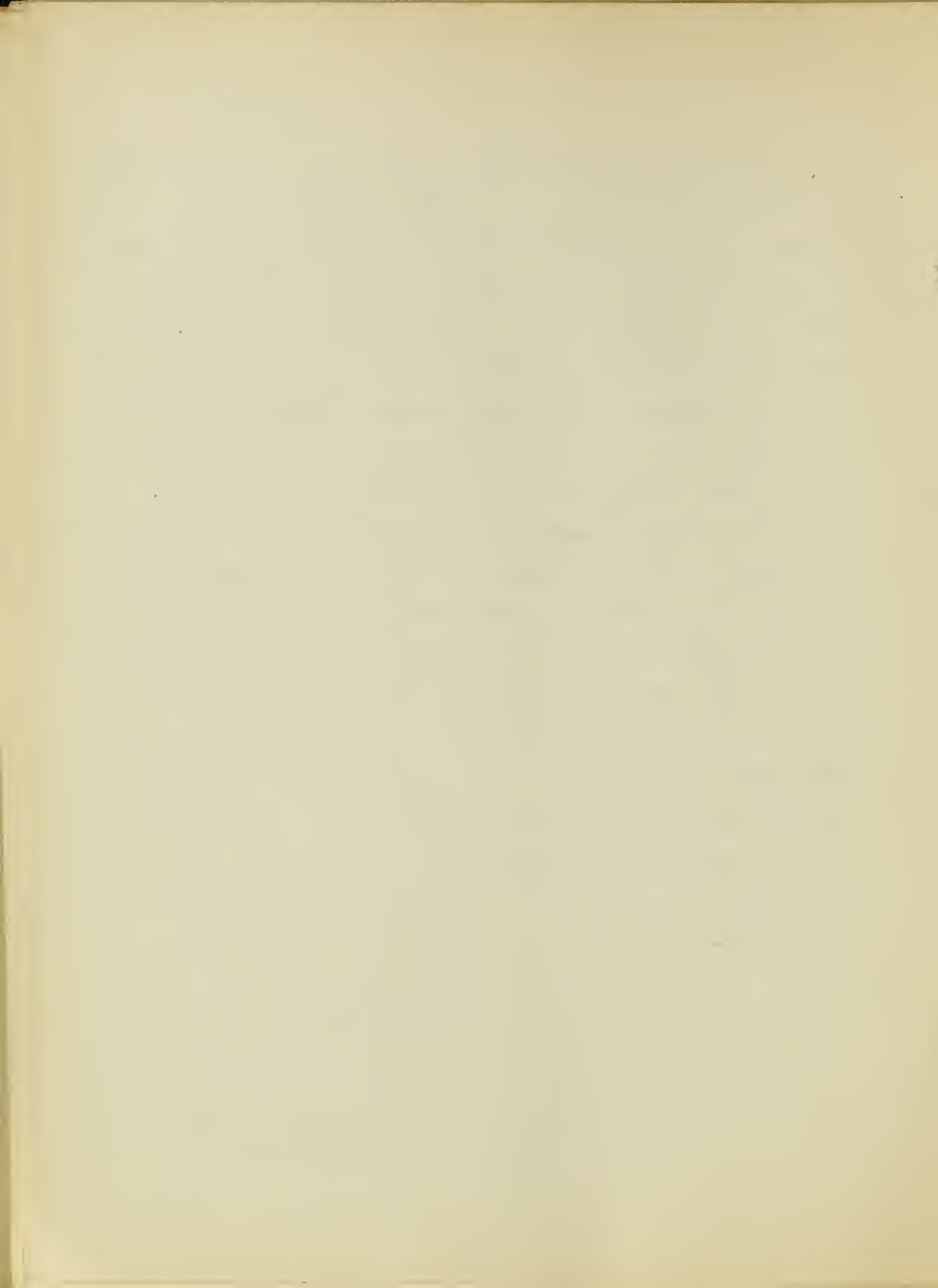
Yet God did not determine, when he endowed man with the power to do either good or evil, what should be the nature of his acts. Both the freedom to choose and the power to act must have been given for a good purpose. Otherwise God was not a wise, beneficent creator. Hence, upon this presupposition, <sup>that God was wise and good,</sup> the end proposed to humanity could have been no other than to realize the harmony and happiness of a spiritual community. We have no assurance that there might not be a moral development of virtue, in the end practically annihilating every form of evil for our race. Thus man would attain to a state of relative perfection, a state of true liberty. We may assume that God prefers the good for the whole race. We may assume that he is pleased with every wise choice made by the individual. Why, then, should it not be consistent with his divine plan, for mankind to always choose the right and do the right, in proportion as it comes to see the right and know the right? Logically speaking, then, there is no reason why moral evil should not be omitted from the lives of finite individuals.



But since man's acts have no value when they are determined, the Creator made him so that he could be either good or evil; and he made conditions so that either good or bad acts were possible. No barrier stands in man's way; no impotence keeps him from the free exercise of his will in doing either good or evil. By giving man freedom, objective conditions were arranged, whereby the way for his voluntary activity was opened; by endowing man with the creative ability of doing either good or evil, the subjective conditions were arranged that are necessary to beget action.

Whatever may be possible logically, we know from experience that man, blessed with freedom and endowed with power, by virtue of his own selfdirecting power, often performs evil deeds, whereby he sins. This does not prove however that he never chooses the good. It only means that God is not directly the author of moral good or moral evil in man, and that, therefore, it is not absolutely necessary for man to do or be one any more than the other. On the other hand, it means that man would have been impotent to sin, but for the power that God gave him. The origin of evil must therefore be explained without involving us in a contradiction with those two tenets.



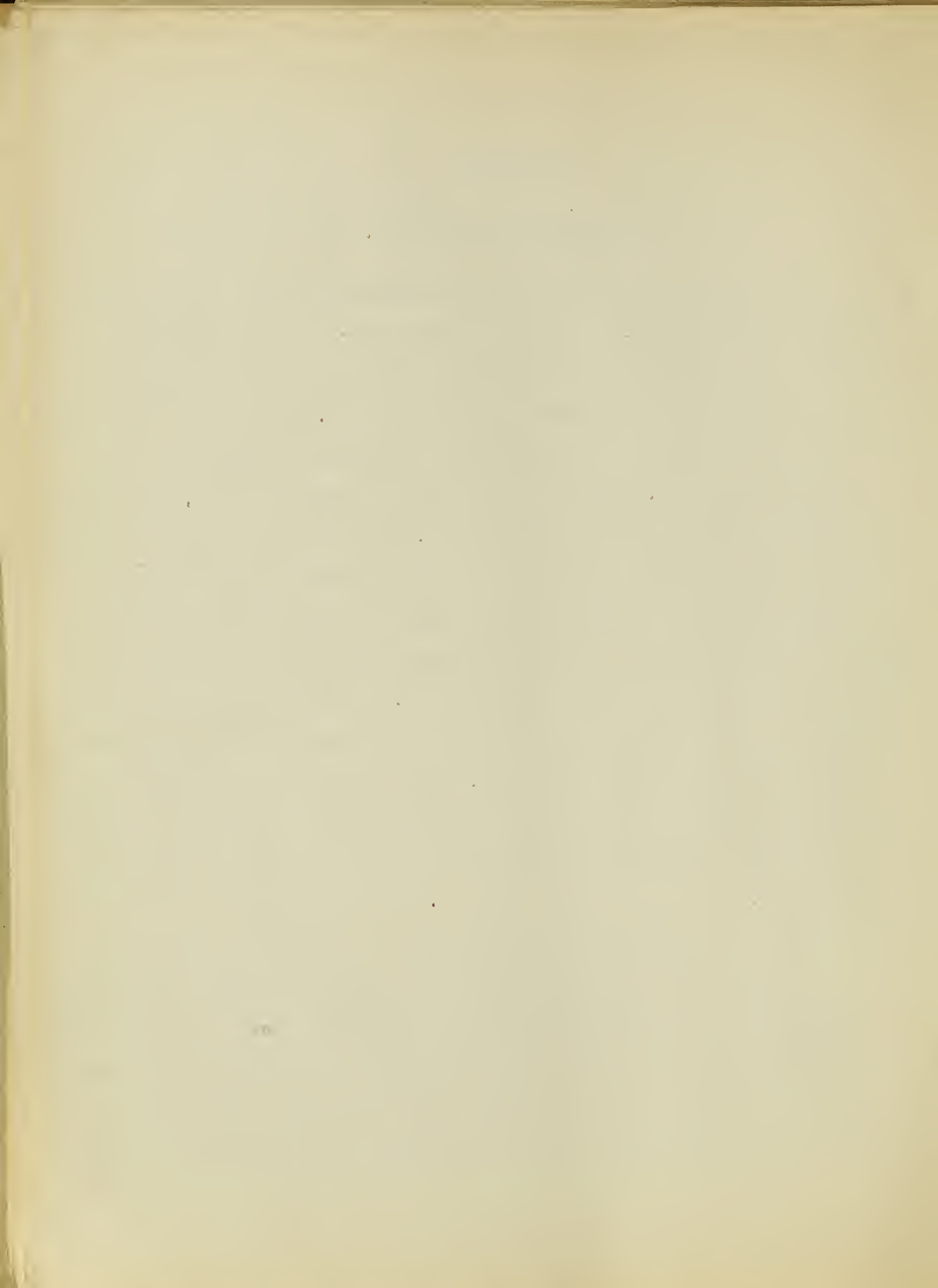


## CHAPTER VI

## The Origin of Evil Will.

The question of an evil principle, eternal and independent, has been set aside. It has been shown that it is contradictory with out original presupposition; for no system can be called moral in which evil is considered independent. It has also been shown that such a principle is impossible because it involves us in a hopeless dualism. Dualism of any kind is unsatisfactory. It always leads to philosophical difficulties. But whenever we have a dualism of two antagonistic forces, the problem becomes infinitely more difficult. Two contending forces cannot long exist together without serious injury to one or both. One must overcome the other, or they will mutually destroy each other. The battle is either a battle of victory for the one and of subjection for the other, or it is a battle unto death for both. If we try to avoid dualism by saying that evil is the product of a creative act of divine causality, it becomes necessary to account for the incongruity of that creative act.

At this point many have been lead to affirm the relativity of all evil and deny that it has any positive existence. Accordingly, all evil is creaturely limitation. Even the sins of selfconscious individuals are not free acts of volitional persons, but the expressions of a defective nature. There is no positive evil will. Sins are the outward manifestation of an inner condition. This process

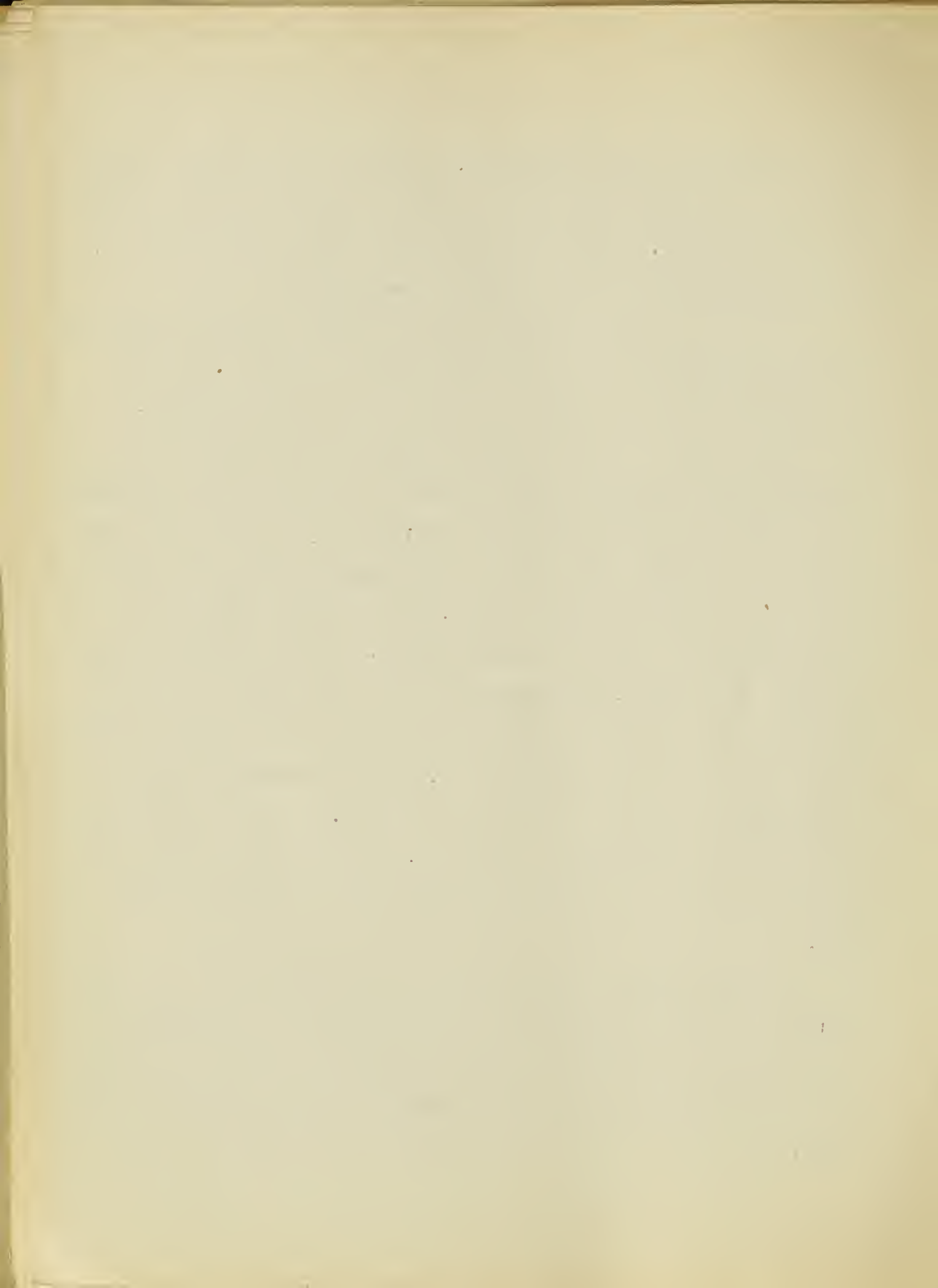


of reasoning is very treacherous. It seems at first sight a plausible way of escape from the implication that God directly created the evil will. It seems preferable to deny positive evil, rather than attribute it to a benevolent causality.

But is this the only way out of the difficulty? It seems not. Before suggesting the way out, however, let us test a number of current views that for one reason or other are all invalid.

If we say that God directly produces the evil will of the individual, we can see no good reason for saying that the individual is free in willing even the good; since, if we admit that God determines the evil will of the individual, we cannot deny that he determines also the good will. But if God determines the good will, there can be no moral freedom. Then the individual does not act from choice. Furthermore, if man is not free to choose, but must act as he does from his very nature, the only logical inference is that he is not free at all. Man would then be a mere automaton in the hand of an infinite creator. He would be buffeted about, not only by circumstances in the outer world, but also by his own conflicting emotions and impulses which God had given him.

If evil exists at all, and is neither co-existent with good nor the product of a creative act of the infinite causality, it must either have arisen of itself, and become a rival of good, or it had its beginning in the free act of volitional, finite creatures.



It could not have arisen of itself, for there is no effect without a cause. Spontaneity explains nothing. "Ex nihilo nihil fit!" The origin of evil, then, must be sought in man. The only question that remains is, If sin was not determined, how came man to voluntary sin, after God had left open the way for him to do so and had endowed him with power to act as a free man?

The Genesis story tells of the tempter who brought about the downfall of man. So, too, the Manichean system teaches that the world is created pure and perfect, but was immediately defiled by the trail of the serpent Ahriman. The latter system is avowedly dualistic and hence need not be considered here. The former gives only a partial explanation unless it makes the tempter independent and eternal. If not, whence the evil disposition of the tempter? It must be accounted for before the origin of evil is explained. Hence many theologians have tried to explain the origin of evil by explaining the first sin of the tempter as selfexaltation. Satan was once a holy angel; he rebelled against subordination, and from this spirit of selfexaltation sprung all the subsequent sin and wickedness. The chief difficulty with this explanation is that it does not go to the final beginning. We have already considered some objections to this explanation of the origin of moral evil. The spirit of selfexaltation and rebellion is itself an evil. What was the origin of that? Whence came this pride? Whence the spirit of selfseeking and domination?

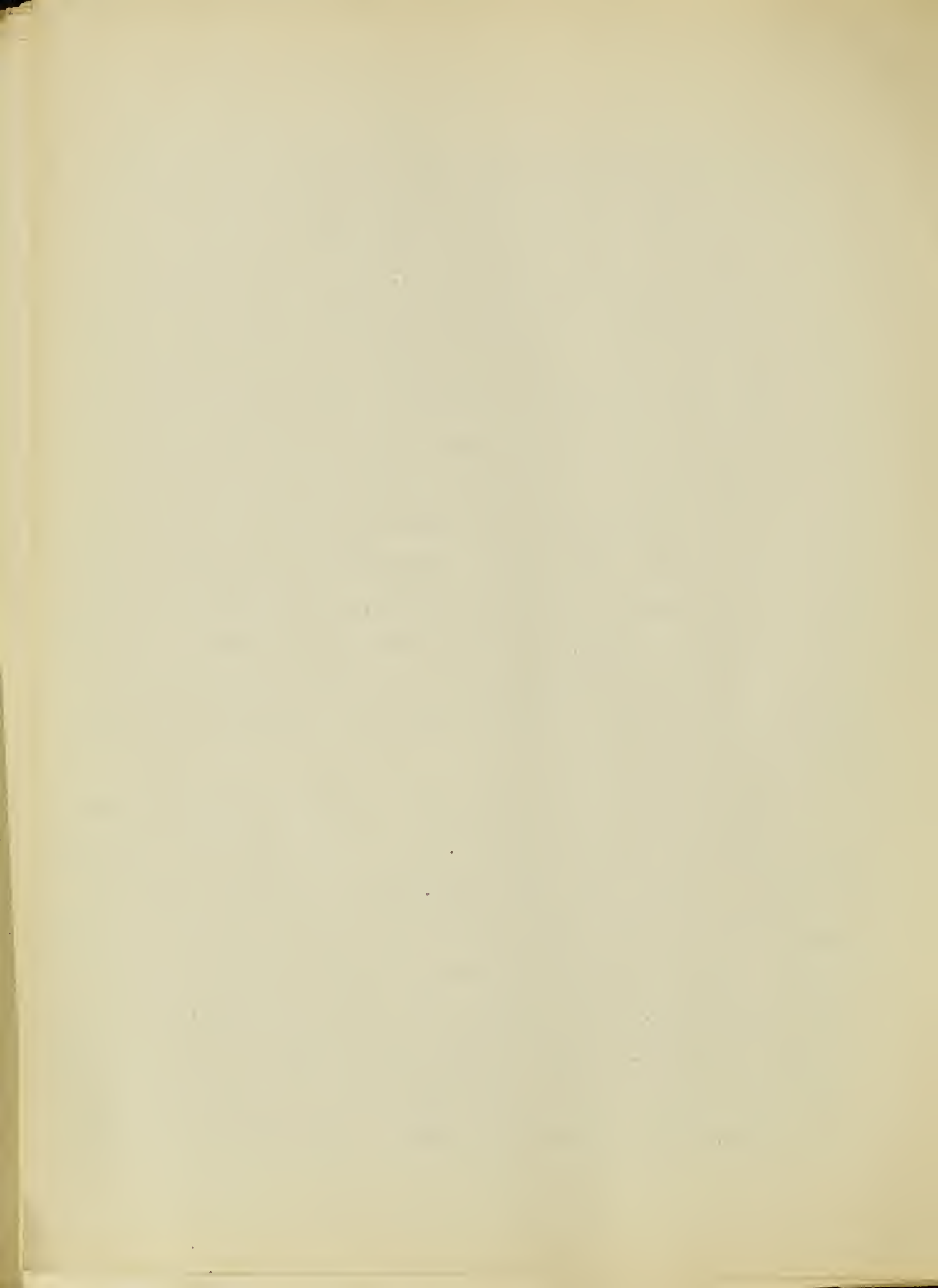
If we turn from the biblical account and the theological





interpretations based upon it, to the versions of the sceptics, we are confronted by such views as those of Comte and Mill, who would have us believe that God is an imperfect workman and not able to create an order entirely good. Evil is ever creeping in without being a part of the Creator's purpose. According to this view, any form of evil is hard to explain. There is attributed to it a sort of independence or selfsufficiency that enables it to exist without a cause. In the case of moral evil, where we have a positive ill will, our difficulties are increased. If moral evil were due to a limitation on God's part, then God's will would be subject to the evil will of his creatures. In other words, according to this view, man would have freedom, not because God desires that he should be free, but because God would be unable to restrict the will of his own creatures, if he chose to do so. God in his impotence would merely be doing the best he could, but would not be able to prevent evil.

According to Kant, in some of his works, at least, sin is derived from man's sensuous nature. Thus in his "Praktische Vernunft" he seems to derive evil from sense, since, he claims, it cannot be derived from freedom nor from man's intelligible or ideal essence, because man's intelligible or ideal character cannot realize itself empirically. This of course makes evil phenomenal. Hence evil is mere privation. Its real origin, it is true, Kant places in transcendental freedom, but its phenomenal manifestation, he derives from sense. We may ask, Does sin have for its object the satisfac-



tion of sense? Not in all cases, to be sure; for how could the end of such sins as pride be the satisfaction of the senses? Sense is that part of our nature that is capable of receiving impressions from the outer world. It may also stimulate action, but it is not an originating factor. Hence we must recall the distinction that we made between natural impulses and moral evil. The former may find expression through the senses, but the latter can originate only in the will of a free conscious being.

Again we are told, that evil has its origin in man's extra-temporal act of selfdecision. This view is calculated to relieve the difficulty of making God the conditioning cause of the possibility of evil. But Leibnitz, the defender of this view, places the extra-temporal existence only in the divine understanding, the source of essence; not in the divine will, the source of existence. Hence from his point it is illogical to speak of an extra-temporal act of selfdecision, which could determine results in actual life. Only temporal will could do that. Moreover, if an extra-temporal act did have an influence upon our temporal life, that would not explain the origin of evil in the extra temporal order. The solution would still be lacking.

Nor does it bring us any nearer the solution of our problem when we place the origin of evil in the soul's pre-existence. This only removes the problem farther into the past, but does not solve it. The state of that previous existence must somehow be accounted for. If evil is to be found there, its existence demands



an explanation. Hence the origin of it continues to puzzle us.

To seek the source of evil in an act of humanity is a mere figment of the mind; for, as we noticed in the discussion on the nature of evil, sin has no existence as a generality. Suffering and sorrows are ills of individuals; sins are deeds or wilful attitudes of free, voluntary individuals. Stop the sinful acts of free conscious beings, and there will be no more sin. Banish the individual, and moral evil will disappear with it. In this problem of evil, the individual is the essential factor. Collective participation does not exist apart from individual deeds.

It goes almost without saying that any mechanical system must fail in its attempt to explain the origin of evil. Evil could not have been produced mechanically, because a mechanical system is itself impossible. It could bring forth nothing. There could be no interaction on this plane. Where, in a mechanical system, could we find the link between cause and effect? Interaction becomes consistent and effects become intelligible only as we place behind them a dynamic, volitional causality. But how could we discover any such thing as an efficient cause, not to speak of a final cause, in a mechanical system? If, then, a mechanical system cannot produce changes, how could a moral consciousness awaken under its influence? Blind nature never did develop anything. Only a dynamic, personal force is able to do this. Our freedom, our power of choice, our moral consciousness, must come from God.

Having eliminated some of the impersonal views, as impossible let us put to the test a view that fits in with personalism. God,

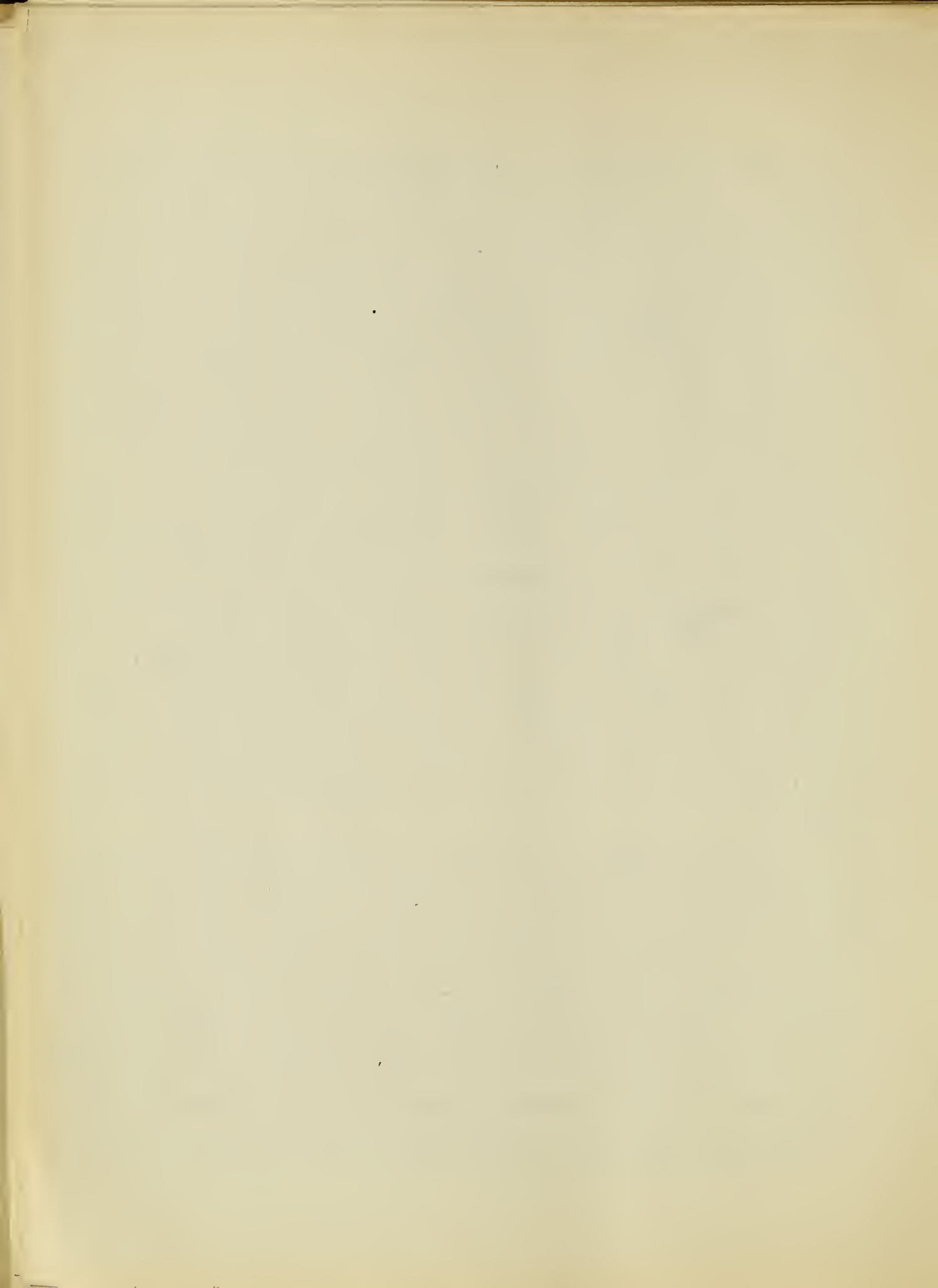




the infinite causality, is a person; but, as has already been observed, he could not have directly created evil wills, wicked deeds, and selfish dispositions. Sinful deeds and evil wills must have originated in some other way, or have no moral significance.

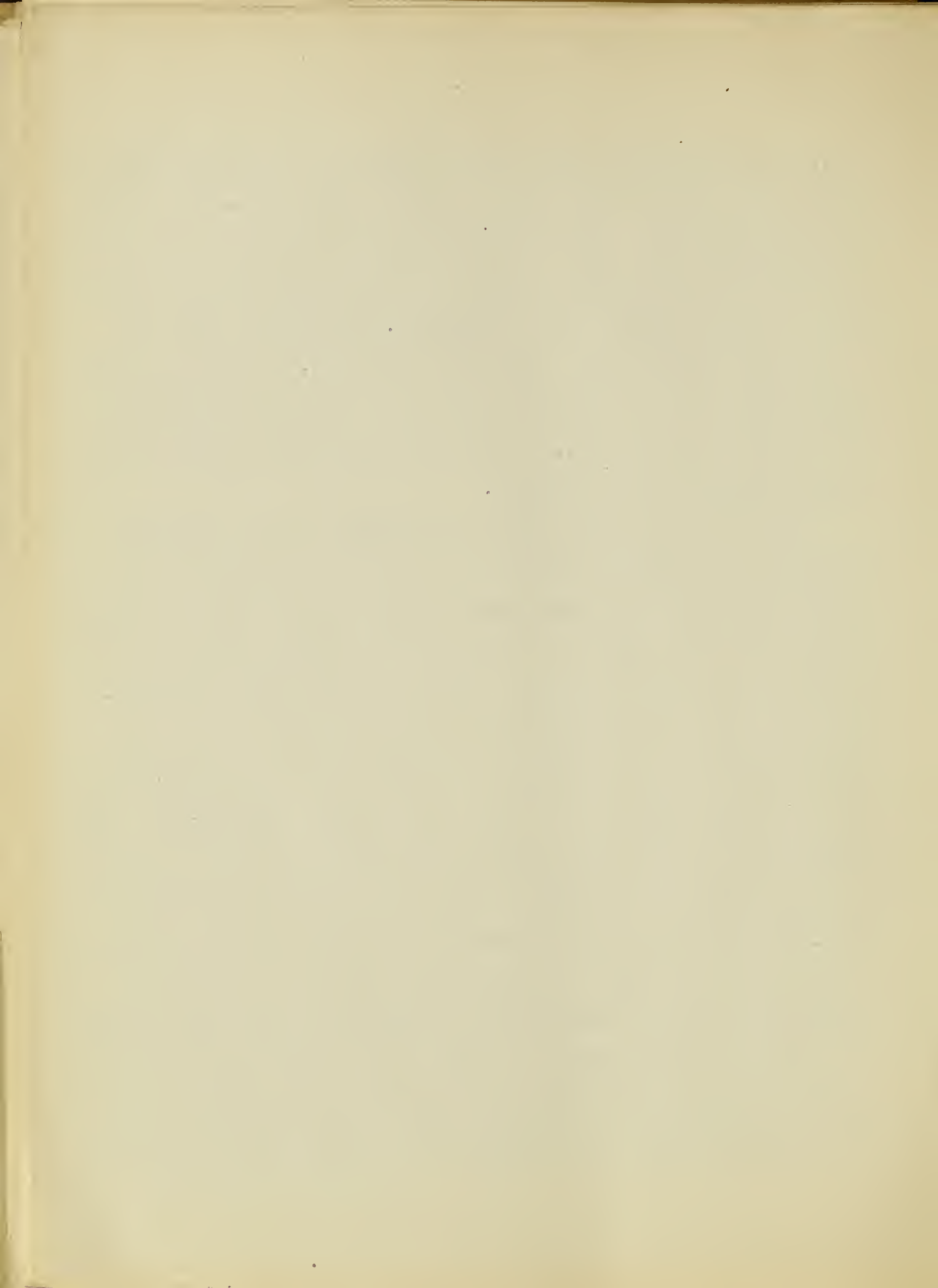
The view which best explains the origin of evil is that which derives it from the free act of a finite person. Evil as an abstract principle, or evil as an independent reality, no longer has any place in our system. Sin is a personal matter and must not be traced to any foreign source. It can have arisen only in persons. We have noticed that the finite individual had to be blessed with liberty and endowed with power before he could be either good or evil. We likewise observed that God did not determine in which way the individual should act. The act of sinning was voluntary. It was the act of a free person. Nothing but a person has creative power. It is the only truly dynamic force. It is the only selfdirecting unit. Hence evil could not have been originated by any but a person.

We must now add that the kind of personality, with which sin originated, was both free and finite. Had the person not been free, sin would not have been sin. This view also helps us to understand more clearly that man was not forced to sin. We must also bear in mind that the only source of moral good in the world, as well as of moral evil, is in free, finite persons. Under any other condition, moral good as well as moral evil, would have been impossible. But by including free agents in his personal system, God made it mo-



ral. These free agents were finite, - finite in knowledge, finite in power, finite in the very nature of inner perfection. But although finite persons have only limited power, this power is nevertheless the power of selfdirection. With this finite power of selfdirection is also coupled limited knowledge. Omniscience cannot be claimed for man any more than can omnipotence. If finite man were omniscient, he would scarcely commit the folly of sinning. Sin as we know it is irrational. It thrives in ignorance. It almost invariably originates in ignorance.

If we say that sin originates in ignorance, the question naturally arises, What differentiates it from error? What does sin contain more than does error or bad conduct? We have already pointed out that error is a mistake of the understanding while sin is an act of the will; but that is not the only difference. There is another difference which shows that sin can grow out of error. When sin originates, it is little more than error. Deeds do not become sinful until moral consciousness awakens. Just this awakening of moral consciousness makes error, or materially bad conduct, sinful. In ignorance man is most likely to err and blunder. But without a consciousness of what error or bad conduct means, there is no sin. Then, however, man tastes of the tree of knowledge, when his understanding unfolds, and when a moral sense of right and wrong begins to manifest itself, then man sees himself in entirely new relations, both to God, his creator, and to his fellow men. This consciousness of relation places on him mo-



ral obligations. Man is now a moral being, and all his wilful acts, his attitude, his deeds, are either morally good or morally bad.

Freedom, personal power, finitude, - these are necessary conditions for the origin and existence of evil. As persons, we have freedom and power to act; as finite persons, we are subject to limitations that make sin easy. Thus man is permitted to sin, because he has liberty; he is able to sin, because he has personal power, or creative power; man does sin, because he is finite and possesses only limited knowledge. Hence, sin in the beginning could have originated only through misdirected impulses. At first it was energy applied to an undesirable end, brought on through ignorance and imperfection.

But when man has acquired intelligence enough to be called moral, he soon learns to distinguish between right and wrong. The development of this moral sense is due very largely to revelation and training, but only partially to experience. The first moral creatures, of course, did not have teachers from whom to receive training. Hence they had to learn largely by experience, and only incidentally from training, which they mutually gave to one another. The process was slower, but just as effective. As experience broadened, man's knowledge and moral sense grew and became a criterion by which he judged his own deeds. God had made man for truth; hence, as soon as he attained the capacity to comprehend truth, his moral sense became strengthened, so that he could deal with truth. The deeds of a moral person are not only materially





good or materially bad; they take on a moral significance in the same proportion as man's knowledge and moral consciousness broaden.

So much for the origin of evil. Why man does not always desist from evil deeds and overcome his evil will, when he learns that they are wrong morally, will be further discussed in the next chapter on the propagation of evil.



## CHAPTER VII

## The Propagation of Evil.

After the evil will originated in the life of an individual, it could not continue, unless strengthened and supported by some influence. This influence must be more than a general principle. We have seen that there is no abstract sin. No evil principle lies at the root of the world's sin. But sinful deeds are very real to experience. Sinful lives are seen all about us. The influence of evil wills and evil deeds are felt on every hand. Bad morals are corrupting the manners of each succeeding generation. We are aware of the shortcomings in our own lives. We discover tendencies in our disposition that our better judgment condemns. All this is very real. It is not a vague, abstract something that ever evades us. It is sin, felt in the human heart and acted out in life. This is more than a principle; it is actual sinning. It does not exist apart from the person sinning. It is the result of his choice and activity. We cannot even say that it exists in a generic sense, for unless it manifests itself in an evil deed or in the ill will of an individual, it has not moral content. There can be weakness or imperfection in man's nature. This may be due to original privation, or it may result from previous sin; but unless individuals are consciously and voluntarily governed by these low tendencies in their natures, their lives cannot properly be called sinful.

A sinful life is one that embraces an attitude of will or a

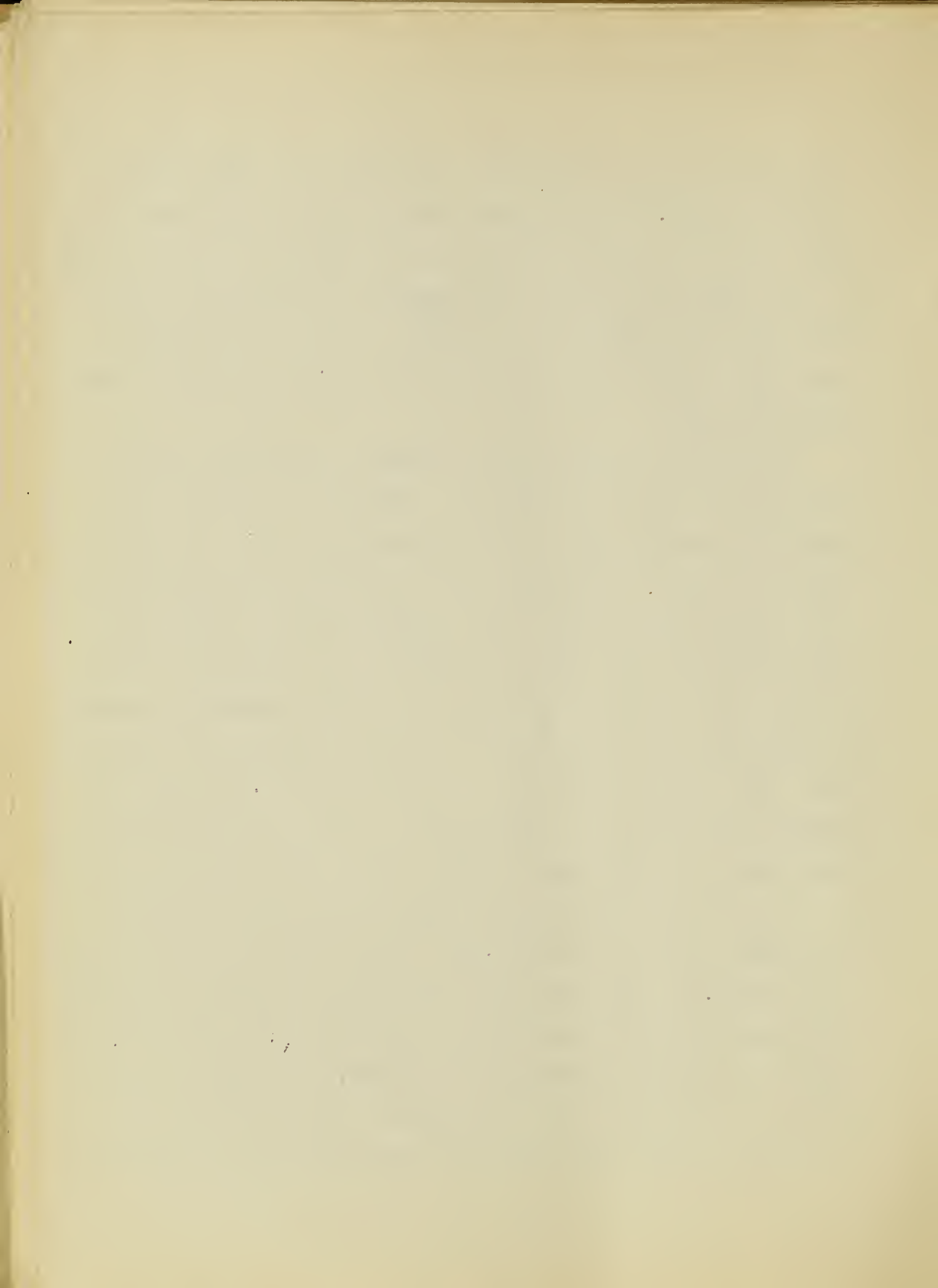


purpose to be in some particular less than the sober judgment pronounces good. This willingness on part of the individual to be less than the best, is a positive act involving a voluntary choice. It is a decision in favor of the worse in presence of a better. With every such decision the tendency to yield to the lower becomes more likely, because the power of resisting an upward striving grows weaker.

Hence, sin not only maintains itself as something real in the life of a sinner; it also has a tendency to grow. Where instinctive impulses have not been properly guarded or directed, where the habit of wrongdoing has been formed, the disposition to do a certain thing becomes more pronounced and the deeds occur more frequently. This can be explained by the formation of individual habits which through frequent regular repetition result in spontaneity, and sometimes, in a strong tendency, which requires more than ordinary resistance to be counteracted. This makes it possible for sin to be propagated in the life of an individual, even after that individual is aware of the sinfulness of his deed.

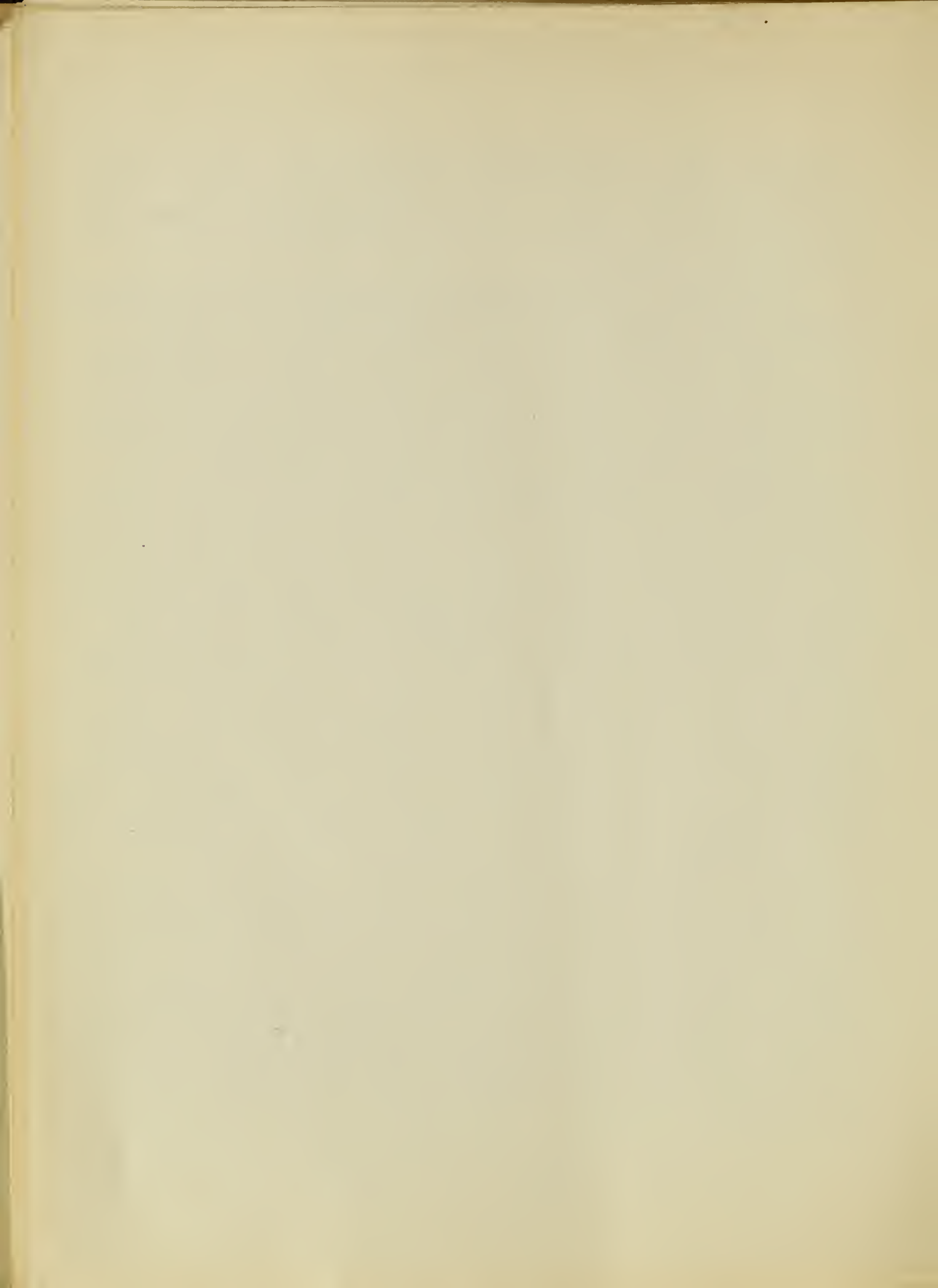
A more difficult problem presents itself when we consider the growth of evil in society. Evil tends to spread by influencing other lives. It is at this point that we are in danger of falling back into the pit of conceiving an abstract principle. To use the figure, so frequently employed by Dr. Bowne, "The monster we just put out of the door is now threatening to come back in at the window." A little reflection will show, however, that an abstract





principle cannot be at work in society any more than it can in the individual; for society has no existence apart from the individuals that comprise it.

How, then, is sin propagated in the social world? The idea of original sin handed down to us through heredity is contrary to our notion of sin. Sin would not be sin if it were thus imputed. Sin through an act of humanity, we also notice, can mean nothing. But sin as it exists in the lives of individuals, tends to produce imperfect conditions. Unsuitable environment is the result. Moreover, when sin becomes a habit or a strong tendency in one individual, it results in acts that are imitated by other individuals, or it manifests itself as a dynamic force of an evil will influencing other wills. When there is added to this opportunity to imitate and this possibility of being influenced the urging of hardened sinners, the allurements of vices that make a strong appeal to the natural instincts, and often turn the impulses to evil, we can understand how sin can propagate itself in the world. It is not the influence of abstract sin; it is the influence of one person's life on the life of another, through an evil personality and sinful deeds. Here, as in every other case, the only dynamic force lies in a personality and the deeds wrought by that personality. Sin is not propagated per se; it must appear in terms of life, and must be manifested and propagated through positive ill will and evil deeds.



## CONCLUSION.

From our consideration of the nature and the origin of evil, it appears that the presence of evil does not in any way make a moral system impossible. We may wonder why God did not make us with natures like his own, creatures possessing all knowledge and all power. We may even ask why God created the world at all; but those are not pertinent questions here. Facing the conditions as we find them, what explanation of evil can we offer? How can we make room for moral evil without destroying the moral character of our system?

Let us recall the fact that there had to be freedom and personal power. Evil could not have originated without them. But is it not equally true that the very moral foundation of our system would have been impossible without them? Freedom and personal power would not have been found in an impersonal system. Hence in such a system we could have neither moral good nor moral evil. It is not surprising therefore, but on the contrary, quite natural, that we should have freedom and personal power in a personal system. But with them we have also the possibility of moral evil.

It does not follow from this that all evil is determined. Moral evil, by its very nature, cannot be determined. If it depends upon freedom it must be contingent. In the strict sense of the word then, moral evil is not logically necessary.

We may also ask the question, Were imperfection and ignorance



necessary? Here the answer cannot be an emphatic no. But could not God create moral beings without imperfections? Let us answer, by asking another question. Could he do it and remain consistent? It has been pointed out elsewhere in this paper that God cannot be limited by objective laws and powers; but that he is governed by his own subjective nature. His limitations are selfimposed because he does not choose to contradict himself. Furthermore, since God lacks the motive to do anything less than that which is perfect, we must infer that he does only what is in harmony with his nature.

We must now consider the question, Would it have been consistent with the divine plan, would it have been at all possible, to create perfect moral beings, impeccable and absolute? No, for by admitting it we admit determinism which is contrary to our conception of moral obligation. God wanted moral persons. They can be moral only by choice. Whatever positive moral good or positive moral evil a dependent creature possesses, it possesses by choosing between two alternatives, and by conscious striving. Hence it is necessary for him to be in a position where striving is possible. For an absolute being that is determined there is no occasion for becoming less than it is, no room for striving to become more than it is. If then, an absolute being were determined by some other power, not itself, it would be what it is without choice and without striving. Hence to make room for this striving and thereby give man an opportunity to share in the development of the moral self, God had to make him less than absolute, or, in other words,





imperfect. In short, God could not create a moral system and necessarily exclude the possibility of evil.

The presence of evil in a moral system is still better understood when we bear in mind that it may be overcome, and that through overcoming it, the individual comes nearer to his goal of perfection. This need not be the only road that leads to perfection, since sin is not absolutely necessary for the existence of good. We feel warranted in this conclusion for two reasons. In the first place, if sin were absolutely necessary, it would be determined; and determined evil, we have seen, would not be sin for the one who does it. In the next place, it is not contrary to reason, nor wholly foreign to experience, to see men embrace the truth, as it is comprehended by them, and walk in the light as it falls into their pathway. This is not saying that man could rise above imperfection and finitude. Man would probably go on blundering in darkness even though he should cease to sin consciously; but he need not in defiance set his obstinate will against what his moral sense tells him to be right. Nor need he purposely ignore the conviction of right and wrong in his own consciousness. Logically there is no reason why he might not wisely and devoutly seek to profit by all conditions in the natural world and follow the inner light in his spiritual nature by striving after his highest ideal and thus become morally perfect.



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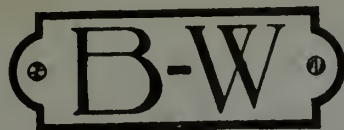
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